

**A THEOLOGY OF DAN CHUNG: A HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO
THE MINISTRY FOR THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES
AND IMMIGRANTS IN THE U. S.**

**A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry**

**by
Luat Trong Tran
May 1993**

This professional project, completed by

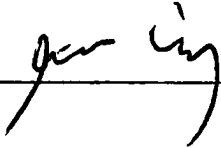
Luat Trong Tran,

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

Cornisa R. Rogers



April 16, 1993
Date


Dean

Abstract

A Theology of Dan Chung:

A Humanistic Approach to the Ministry

for the Vietnamese Refugees and Immigrants in the U. S.

Luat Trong Tran

The aftermath of the Vietnam War has seen an increasing number of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants relocating in the United States. With the steady arrival of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants, it is a challenge for the church to offer a practical ministry to help them in the struggle of their integration into this new society. To carry out this purpose, the church needs to develop a practical theology for ministry that can help keep alive their faith in God, restore their integrity, and foster a vision that gives direction and purpose to life.

This project undertakes to assess a theology of the Vietnamese dan chung whose faith in Troi helps them survive the extraordinary kho and han that resulted from centuries of foreign occupation and intervention. Such a faith gives them hope and sustains life in difficult situations.

The study presents the social-political context of the Vietnamese dan chung and the problems of kho and han. The

social-political hermeneutics of dan chung theology point out that God highly valued the poor and the oppressed in the Old Testament, and took them in as objects of his defense and liberation. And in the New Testament, the objects of Jesus' mission were the common people or dan chung. Jesus offered practical ministry to them. He gave them new direction and hope.

From that viewpoint, this study attempts to suggest a humanistic approach for ministry to the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in the context of American society and culture. It pursues a careful examination of the problems and immediate needs of the refugees, and suggests practical applications in many areas of ministry.

It is prayerfully to be hoped that, to some measure, this effort will prove efficacious in practice.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my profound thankfulness to my wife, Thuy-Oanh, for all her love -- her supportive prayers, her consistent encouragement. Despite their youth, my son, Vu Tran, and my younger daughter, Van-Nga, have similarly earned my grateful respect. Unquestionably, it was my family's patient support and their ready willingness to adapt schedules and lifestyles that enabled me to complete this project during the period of time in which I found myself most intensively involved in ministry.

For their encouragement and loving support, I wish also to thank the members of my Vietnamese congregation at the West Anaheim United Methodist Church. It has been at this church that I have been offered the exceptional opportunity to minister to the refugees and immigrants newly arrived from Vietnam. It has been among these good people that most of the practical recommendations in this project have been tested and proved effective.

Last but not least, it is with profound gratitude that I acknowledge Joe Mediati for the proofreading and the helpful advice in editing of this project.

Tables of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgments	iii
Chapter	
1. Introduction	1
Issue Addressed by This Project	1
Importance of the Problem	1
Thesis	3
Definitions of Major Terms	3
Work Previously Done in the Field	6
Scope and Limitations of the Project	6
Procedure for Integration	7
2. Understanding the Vietnamese in the United	
States	8
Historical Background of Vietnamese Refugees	
and Immigrants	8
Cultural Background of Vietnamese Refugees and	
Immigrants and Issues in Cultural	
Adjustment	11
Vietnamese Family Structure and Values	11
Issues in Cultural Adjustment	15
Difficulties in Counseling the Vietnamese..	18
Psychological Issues of the Newly	
Arriving Vietnamese	20

Practical Issues Confronting the Vietnamese	
Refugees and Immigrants	23
Language and Skill Inadequacy	23
Isolation and Cultural Shock	23
Great Expectations	24
Feelings of Failure	25
Feelings of Loss of Identity	26
Racism	27
3. Theological Perspective for Ministry	29
A Refugee's Metaphor	30
Theological Tasks for Vietnamese Ministry ...	34
Prophetic Ministry	34
Visionary Ministry	36
Understanding of Humanity and the Human	
Need for Liberation	39
My Call to the Ministry to the Refugees	41
A Theology of Culture for Ministry	43
4. A Theology of Dan Chung	51
Troi	52
Troi and God	54
Kho and Han	57
Dan Chung	58
A Brief History of Vietnam	58
Kho and Han of the Vietnamese Refugees	62
Resolution of Kho and Han	67
Faith in Troi	67

	Dismantlment of the Oppressive Structure..	70
	Troi Embraces Our Pain	73
5.	Practical Recommendations for Ministry Mandated	
	by the Christian Understanding of God	76
	Formation of a Loving and Caring Community ..	76
	Hospitality Evangelism	81
	Worship and Preaching	84
	Pastoral Counseling	90
	A Serving Community	96
	Sponsorship Ministry	99
	Teaching English as a Second Language	101
	Employment	102
	Housing	103
6.	Summary and Conclusion	107
	Summary	107
	Conclusion	108
	Bibliography	111

Dedication

I dedicate this work to both my paternal and maternal grandfathers: Rev. Tran Tung and Rev. Nguyen Xuan Diem. I dedicate it to my father, Rev. Tran Trong Giao, and my mother, Nguyen thi Bach Tuyet. I include in this dedication my uncles: Rev. Nguyen Xuan Hao, Rev. Nguyen Van Van, Rev. Tran Trong Thuc, Rev. Tran Luong. It was their faith, sacrifices and ministerial service that helped form my own faith. All these beloved people have preconditioned my commitment to the ministry.

Likewise, I dedicate this work to: Rev. Paul Contento, my spiritual leader in the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in Vietnam; Rev. Nguyen Huu Cuong, my former pastor at An Dong Church in Vietnam; Rev. Phu Ho and Rev. Son Nguyen who heartily supported me at the very beginnings of my call to ministry; my colleagues in the Vietnamese Caucus of the United Methodist Church; my fellow-workers; and all the clergy and lay persons who have committed themselves in the Vietnamese ministry.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Issue Addressed by This Project

Although the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the consequences of that war linger on. Thousands of Vietnamese still come to the United States with immigrant or refugee status.

This project attempts to look for practical ways to minister to the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants. It deals with understanding the newly arriving refugees who are mostly former "re-education camp" prisoners. They survived the war as well as years of subsequent suffering from imprisonment. Upon arriving in the United States, they face culture shock and difficulties of adaption and adjustment to their new life in America. Most of them are unprepared for what they find in the new country. They need a practical ministry to help them survive the stark reality that often dashes their hopes and dreams.

Importance of the Problem

According to a recent report on American demographics, the Vietnamese are one of the fastest growing minorities in

the U. S. ¹ In 1960 a total of only 3 Vietnamese among 59 immigrants from Indochina were admitted to the U. S.² But since the historic fall of Saigon in 1975, thousands of Vietnamese refugees have been admitted to the U. S. Since 1980 more than 250,000 Vietnamese have come to the U. S., and about 12,000 Vietnamese are eligible to enter the United States each year under the Orderly Departure Program agreed to by the U. S. and Vietnam governments.³ Late in 1987 a new wave of Vietnamese immigrants began flowing into the country under the Amerasian Homecoming Act enacted by the United States Congress. This Act specifically enables Amerasians and their families to immigrate to the U. S. The Humanitarian Operation also enables former political prisoners from Vietnam's so-called re-education camps and their close family members to come to the U. S. for permanent settlement since 1990. By the time the agreement expires in 1995, officials estimate that the total will rise to 100,000, helping to push the Vietnamese population in the U. S. past 1 million.⁴ These special groups of new refugees and immigrants are unique among Vietnamese in the

¹ Leon F. Bouvier, "The Fastest Growing Minority," American Demographics, May 1985: 15-33.

² Bryant Robey, "America's Asian," American Demographics, May 1985: 26.

³ Ibid. 27.

⁴ Anh Do, "Prisoners: New Vietnamese Immigrants Escaped Political Tyranny, But Not War's Stigma," Orange County Register, 4 Oct. 1992: A20.

United States. Their particular life experience due to their history and suffering obviously requires special understanding and caring by the church.

Thesis

This project is developed from the writer's theological perspective concerning this issue, and from his experience in ministering to the Vietnamese refugees. This project undertakes to assess an authentic theology for ministry to the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants, especially to those who have experienced extraordinary suffering by the war in Vietnam, in their efforts to mainstream into American society. The study attempts to suggest a humanistic approach for ministry to the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in the context of American society and culture.

Definitions of Major Terms

Troi

Troi is the Vietnamese folk belief in the heavenly deity who is the creator and sovereign God of all creation.

Dan chung

This is a compound Vietnamese noun composed of dan meaning "people" and chung meaning "the mass." In the social-political context of Vietnam history, dan chung were the common people who suffered from foreign forces that oppressed, exploited, and kept them under the yoke of slavery.

Kho

The term kho is a common utterance cried out by the Vietnamese expressing intolerable suffering, pain, physical and emotional distress caused by forces beyond their control.

Han

The word han is a Vietnamese lamentation expressing anger, bitterness, grief. It also denotes the broken-heartedness of individuals or peoples who are exploited and oppressed.

Amerasian Vietnamese

Amerasians from Vietnam are the children of Vietnamese mothers and American fathers. They were born of relationships between American citizens and Vietnamese women during the war. Their ages would now range between 15 and 29. They are allowed to come to the United States through the Amerasian Homecoming Act which was passed by the U. S. Congress in 1987 and enacted in 1988.

Former Re-education Camp Prisoners

After the fall of South Vietnam on April 4, 1975, thousands of Vietnamese military officials who had cooperated with the United States were sent to "re-education camps" where they endured years of forced labor and political indoctrination. Now, thanks to an agreement between the governments of the United States and Vietnam, these people and their families are coming to the U. S. to

start a new life.

Immigrants

The term here denotes Vietnamese who come to the United States for family reunification. Most of these have close relatives who have already been in the U. S. over five years. This group includes persons who are allowed to immigrate because of other humanitarian reasons.

Practical Ministry

Practical ministry includes major areas of ministry and activities including evangelism, pastoral counseling, worship, preaching and material assistance provided to the newcomers by the local church with the purpose of helping them acclimate to American society smoothly and attain wholeness of life.

Practical Theology

The term here signifies reflection and interpretation arising out of the living experience of believers in a certain community of faith which serves to guide life and action.

Humanistic Approach

This denotes a method which aims to achieve a meaningful, abundant, full life for all persons. It is an approach that lifts up the sacredness of all human beings, and regards respect and integrity for all persons in spite of their historical, cultural, intellectual and social background.

Work Previously Done in the Field

Although Vietnamese refugees have been coming to the United States since 1975, the church has not yet developed a realistic approach for Vietnamese ministry. A small number of projects on evangelization to the Vietnamese were written on the foundation of traditional Christian theology. Still, no humanistic theology for ministry to the Vietnamese and immigrants has developed. Furthermore, very little empirical research has been done on the newly arriving Amerasians and Vietnamese former prisoners. What is available is largely journalistic or anecdotal. My hope is to be able to add an empirical study and an initial formulation of a humanistic approach for ministry to the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project is limited to the study of the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants, particularly Amerasians and Vietnamese former prisoners who have recently come to the United States for settlement. Although this study focuses mainly on the problems of the newly arriving refugees and immigrants, the theology for ministry and its practical recommendations are meant to include those who have moved into later stages of the process of integrating into American society.

Theologically, this project presents a humanistic consideration for Vietnamese ministry. Further development

of a Vietnamese theology will enrich the content of this thinking, and will strengthen its relevance in the Vietnamese church and society.

Procedure for Integration

This project integrates academic and empirical resources. The author has combined the historical, cultural, psychological and sociological understanding of the issue with his own experience as a refugee to define the problems. He presents a humanistic approach to the ministry on the foundation of refugees' experience and Vietnamese culture. The theology of Vietnamese dan chung is developed to serve as a foundation for understanding and for the solution of the problems.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding the Vietnamese in the United States

Historical Background of Vietnamese Refugees and Immigrants

Vietnamese immigration to the United States has occurred in several waves since the collapse of the government of the Republic of South Vietnam. Each wave has drawn a specific class of people.

First Wave

In April 1975, when the Saigon government was about to fall, the U. S. government initiated "Operation Babylift" to transport orphaned Vietnamese children to the U. S. ¹ Later, in order to prevent a future bloodbath when the Vietnamese Communists would come to power, the American Embassy drew up a list of people to be evacuated. These included high-ranking military officials and educated middle-class professionals such as military officers, government ministers, employees of American agencies and corporations, and others whose lives were deemed to be

¹ Keith S. Cartmail, Exodus Indochina (Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984), 89.

threatened. ²

Second Wave

Throughout the 1980s the flood continued with the phenomenon of the "boat people." Due to political persecution and economic hardship under the new regime, thousands of families were eager to flee communist rule in small and rickety fishing boats. They arrived in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore with hopes of being admitted for resettlement in a third country. By 1979, more than 250,000 refugees crowded into resettlement camps.³ To help solve the problem, the United States led the rest of the world by increasing the quota of Indochinese refugees admitted for resettlement.

Third Wave

The Vietnamese Government has permitted Amerasians to depart Vietnam since 1982. Progress in the Amerasian Program was slow until the U. S. Congress passed PL 97-359, known as the "Amerasian Immigration Act."⁴ Since the passage of the Act, movements of Amerasians out of Vietnam have significantly increased as the governments of Vietnam and the United States work toward a resolution of the Amerasian

² Beth C. Baldwin, Capturing the Change (Santa Ana, Calif.: Immigrant and Refugee Planning Center, 1982), 17-18.

³ Ibid. 19.

⁴ In Our Father's Land: Vietnamese Amerasians in the United States, Executive Summary of Survey (Washington D. C.: United States Catholic Conferences, 1985), 1.

issue as mandated by the Act.

The Amerasian Homecoming Act established the goal of having all Amerasians and accompanying family members in Vietnam depart as immigrants, without the need to qualify as refugees to gain entry to America. The bill also provided that Amerasians remain eligible for refugee benefits, even though they are entering the U. S. as immigrants.

According to the statistics on Amerasian children by the Orderly Departure Program, by the end of 1991 a total of 14,253 Amerasians and 32,188 members of their families had been admitted to the U. S. ⁵ The State Department had estimated that up to 20,000 more, accompanied by another 60,000 Vietnamese family members, would arrive by the end of 1992.⁶

Fourth Wave

The last wave of Vietnamese refugees who have been arriving in the United States since 1990 constitutes a special group of people. They are political prisoners who stayed behind at the war's end and are now arriving in the United States by the hundreds each month. They are former military officers and government officials who served in the South Vietnam armed forces or government. According to a source at the U. S. State Department, since 1990, 50,000

⁵ Jeffrey Brody, "Few Amerasians Are Settling In," Orange County Register, 14 Mar. 1991: A11.

⁶ Dianne Klein, "Vietnam's Castoffs Come Home," Los Angeles Times, 30 June 1991: A28.

former political prisoners and their families have resettled in the United States as part of an agreement with the Hanoi Government.⁷ United States immigration officials estimate that 100,000 ex-prisoners and their families will arrive before the agreement expires in 1995.⁸

Cultural Background of Vietnamese Refugees
and Immigrants and Issues in Cultural Adjustment
Vietnamese Family Structure and Values

Like other countries in Asia, Vietnam is strongly influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism. Vietnamese traditional values governing family life have been dominated by the philosophy and ethics of Confucius, with an emphasis on roles and relationships among people in those roles. The five basic relationships of society are those between the ruler and his subjects, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger siblings, and friends.⁹ For the purpose of achieving personal fulfillment and harmony in society, these relationships demand loyalty and respect.¹⁰

While the American family places emphasis on the individual and on the single nuclear family, Vietnamese culture asserts that the family is more important than the

⁷ Do, A20.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Man Keung Ho, Family Therapy With Ethnic Minorities (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1987), 25.

¹⁰ Anh Toan, Nep Cu [Old patterns] (Saigon: Dai Nam, 1968), 9.

individual. The individual is seen as the product of all the generations of one's family from the beginning of time. This concept of family is expressed by ancestor worship and the custom of keeping family tree records, which trace family members back many generations.¹¹

Hieu, or filial piety of parents, is very important in the family. It is the children's attitude of honoring parents, and the dedication and actual acts of serving parents. The greatest obligations of children are to the parents who brought them into the world and who provided care during their helpless years. The child is obligated to obey, and give respect and serve one's parents, regardless of what the parents may do.¹²

In relation to this sense of obligation is the concept of shame and loss of face which are used to reinforce the individual's proper behavior. In Vietnamese culture, interdependence is very important. When an individual in a family does a foolish thing, it not only causes him to lose face, but also causes him to forfeit the confidence and support of his family and of other people. In Vietnamese culture, two or three generations often live under the same roof. The extended family is maintained by the sharing of a common shelter or by frequent visits.

¹¹ Ibid. 21.

¹² Anh Duy Dao, Viet Nam Van Hoa Su Cuong [The cultural history of Vietnam] (Saigon: Dai Nam, 1965), 112-13.

When a woman marries she is absorbed into the family of her husband. Her position is lower than those of both her husband and her parents-in-law. According to Confucian teaching, in youth she must follow and obey her father; when married she must follow her husband. In her later years, she must follow her oldest son.¹³

Under the patriarchal system, the father is the head of the family. He is the breadwinner and responsible for the welfare of the family. The mother, on the other hand, is housebound as nutrient caretaker of husband and children. The father provides and enforces the rules as the family disciplinarian. The children's responsibility at home is to obey their parents. They must behave themselves in such a way that will not bring shame or loss of face to their parents.¹⁴ In Confucian filial tradition, filial piety and brotherhood are closely related. Hieu means respecting and serving parents, and thao means brotherly and sisterly affection. The oldest son in the Vietnamese family plays an important role. He is the respected child in the family. While he has authority over his younger brothers and sisters, he must also carry more responsibilities than the rest of the children. He is expected to set a good example for his younger brothers and sisters. At the death of the

¹³ Toan, Nep Cu 204.

¹⁴ Binh Ke Phan, Viet Nam Phong Tuc [Vietnamese customs] (Los Alamitos, Calif.: Xuan Thu, 1990), 22-23.

father, he assumes authority and leadership over the family.¹⁵ He is expected to give guidance to his younger brothers and sisters.

Under the influence of Buddhism, qualities such as compassion, respect for life, moderation in behavior, self discipline, patience, modesty and friendliness are highly valued in Vietnamese culture.¹⁶ To maintain harmony in the family, all members are expected to exercise patience, uncomplaining in adverse situations and tolerant in the painful moments of life.

Traditionally, marriage is an institution which is designed to preserve the name of the family. Parents have the right to choose a wife or a husband for their sons or daughters regardless of the will of their children.¹⁷ The Vietnamese people consider divorce shameful for the family, especially for the female. The wife who suffers discord and unhappiness would rather bear the suffering herself until the end of her life than divorce her husband.

The Vietnamese people place great value upon education. They have a long tradition of respect for learning and scholarship. Scholars and educated people always have an

¹⁵ Dao, 113.

¹⁶ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷ Ibid., 114.

exalted status in society.¹⁸ In the Vietnamese culture, education not only benefits the students, but is also an expression of gratitude to the parents. When one graduates and is employed, he will give financial support to his parents and his nuclear family.¹⁹

Issues in Cultural Adjustment

The structure of the Vietnamese family provides an environment of mutual support and interdependence. When the Vietnamese arrive in the United States, the situation is clearly changed. In Vietnam they always enjoyed material and emotional support from their relatives and friends in all circumstances. Suddenly, the support system upon which they depended is no longer available in the United States. The extended network that nurtured the family in Vietnam is missing. This breakdown of family structure leads to dysfunction in the family and creates many problems.

The second reason that causes negative effects on decision-making and on the functioning of the family is the discrepancy in acculturation between husband and wife and between parents and children. As soon as the Vietnamese refugees or immigrants arrive in the United States, the younger children are naturally more receptive to American culture and values. They easily expose themselves to the new

¹⁸ Anh Toan, Phong Tục Việt Nam [The customs of the Vietnamese] (Saigon: Cuu Long Giang, 1969), 435-52.

¹⁹ Ibid., 458.

concepts of individualism and independence, and especially to attitudes related to authority, sexuality and freedom of choice. This renders dysfunctional the patriarchal structure of traditional Vietnamese families.

Concerning the relationship between parents and children, Vietnamese children's assimilation of American culture and values can actually make them strangers in their own family. Their newly learned concepts cause conflicts, and distance them from their parents, leading to the breakdown of communication and the disruption of family process. Furthermore, difficulties in giving expression to their feelings may occur with Vietnamese children born in the United States. For example, in Vietnamese culture love is not expressed by a kiss or a hug or by such phrases as "I love you." It is expressed through certain actions. The father expresses his love for the family by working hard to satisfy their needs, and he demonstrates understanding through appropriate guidance and direction. The children can misunderstand and underestimate their parents' love as inferior when they observe that American parents are more demonstrative in the expression of their affection.

Another important factor that leads to family problems is the failure to fulfill one's role in the family. For example, a father has high expectations for the academic excellence of his son in school. He expects his son to succeed without a due consideration of the time necessary

for language acquisition. This expectation may be entirely unreasonable and beyond his son's ability. As a result, his son considers it his failure to fulfill the primary requirement of his role in the family, and acts out by isolating and blaming himself.

Problems also occur when there is a change or shift of the traditional roles of husband and wife in the family. For example, because the wife has to work to help support the family, she no longer has enough time and energy to fulfill her traditional role as nutrient caretaker of her husband and children. Although the wife often accepts this new responsibility, she also demands more respect and consideration from her husband for this added duty. If the husband lacks understanding or fails to accommodate her new role, conflict in the family will occur. In addition, when the wife goes to work, the supportive link between herself and her children may be weakened. Consequently, when the children have problems, the wife may blame herself for not being able to stay home with them, or blame her husband for failing to live up to his role as the provider for the family. On the other hand, the husband may feel that his authority is being challenged by his wife's career in that he may be perceived as failing to live up to his traditional role as breadwinner. This feeling can bring shame and dishonor upon him.

Difficulties in Counseling the Vietnamese

Because the Vietnamese are not familiar with Western mental-health concepts, it is not easy for them to enter into treatment. Many Vietnamese do not understand the role of a family therapist. They consider treatment in mental hygiene to be for those who are lunatic or mentally abnormal. It is shameful for them to admit that they have emotional or psychological difficulties. In addition, problems are supposed to be kept within the family and solved there. Bringing a problem to an outsider such as a therapist is seen as very shameful. Therefore, a Vietnamese person frequently enters treatment feeling ashamed and defeated. Some cannot control their behavior, which often leads to violence or even suicide.

One of the difficulties in counseling the Vietnamese is communication. American society encourages the open expression of ideas and feelings. Openness and honesty are said to be the best policies. Within the Vietnamese culture there is quite a different attitude toward open and free communication of thoughts and feelings. People view confrontation as disrespect and lack of moderation. Because of the fear that directness in speech may lead to disagreement, hurt feelings and loss of face, much of the Vietnamese style of communication is indirect and talking around the point. The counselor, therefore, might best avoid direct confrontational questions such as "Do you care

about your wife?" or "Tell your husband what you really think of him."

Concerning this difficulty in communication, it is necessary that the counselor be sensitive to their cultural and traditional values in order to create a trusting and comfortable relationship with the Vietnamese one seeks to help. One should develop a trusting and friendly relationship with the family so that they in turn may feel comfortable revealing information. For the Vietnamese, open communication of feelings is difficult, and it is even more difficult when such is to be expressed in front of an outsider. The counselor should be able to read between the lines to grasp major issues, because Vietnamese clients may not reveal their problems straightforwardly. They often minimize and discuss their problems indirectly.

Most of the Vietnamese families become frustrated when they cannot adapt effectively to the reality they experience. Therefore they need to be helped to alter dysfunctional mechanisms. This is a necessary part of helping them to move on. They also need help to restore their self-esteem and to reinforce their strength to cope with the situation. When their confidence and competency are restored, they can deal with grief, anger and depression effectively from a renewed position.

Psychological Issues of the Newly Arriving Vietnamese

The new group of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants consists of ex-prisoners and Amerasians. The ex-prisoners are former military officers and government officials imprisoned by Vietnam's communist government after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Although they survived the war and years of hardship in the camps, they carry with them an emotional toll and psychological stress. After years of toil and torture, many have arrived broken both in spirit and health. Those released after five to fifteen years of detention obviously carry with them certain physical and mental health problems. For many, the burdens of age, humiliation and hardships have sapped their fighting spirit. For some, they also have sapped their hopes for a better life. They have suffered the ill-fortune of arriving in the United States during a period of prolonged economic recession and high unemployment, which makes them all the more vulnerable to the surrounding hostility and discrimination.

Amerasians are the children of Vietnamese mothers and American fathers. They were born of relationship between American citizens and Vietnamese women during the war in Vietnam. Generally, Amerasians are victims of war as well as the products of history. They have suffered in a multitude of ways. As highly visible reminders of foreign intrusion into a society that values racial and ethnic purity, they often bear the brunt of hostility in their own

country. They were not accepted in Vietnam, due in part to their being of mixed race, and due also to the status of their mothers, who were considered to be low class and generally stereotyped as prostitutes. The disgrace to these children was profound and their deficits are numerous.

They have spent their lives growing up as outsiders in a homogeneous society. They were born into a society whose culture dictates that one's identity is tied to one's father, and they had no fathers in their lives. Many of their mothers felt forced to give their Amerasian children away due to extreme economic and social harassment. They were called con bui doi (children of the dust). They spent their youth on the fringes of society. Many of them had lived on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City or other cities, cast out by both family and society. Others, who continued to live with their mothers or other relatives, survived from hand to mouth as street vendors or manual laborers. A lucky few are members of stable, loving families, with stepfathers who protect and support them.

In general, most Amerasians have low self-esteem and suffer from identity confusion. They do not have adequate education because of alienation, shame, and discrimination.

As many as 15 percent of Amerasians received no formal education whatsoever, and up to 75 percent have had less than four years of schooling. The majority are illiterate in Vietnamese and arrived in the United States with no

transferable job skills. ²⁰

Vietnamese Amerasians are at highest risk for serious problems among recent Vietnamese refugees and immigrants. Without additional support to help them achieve economic and emotional self-sufficiency, many of them may fall into a cycle of poverty, gang membership and welfare dependency.

Most recent refugees show symptoms of psychological withdrawal and dissociation. Among the refugees, however, the elderly persons suffer most. However, the younger immigrants are willing to adjust and to make some changes. They have a strong drive to become successful. They strive to become accepted into the mainstream of American society. Unfortunately, many labor under the false assumption that in order to enjoy equality, freedom and prosperity, they must uproot themselves totally from their own culture and plunge themselves wholly into American culture and tradition. As a result, many end up in despair and disillusionment.

As we have learned, the concept of the melting pot does not work with Asians, people from the Middle East, and Blacks. Their native culture and identity are very important to these ethnic groups. It is essential to understand that when people become a part of the cultural mainstream, they do not need completely to abandon their own cultural heritage. On the contrary, it is good to hold on

²⁰ Kirk C. Felsman and Mark C. Johnson, "For Amerasians, a Welcome Mat Is Not Enough," Los Angeles Times, 23 Jan. 1969: A5.

to some traditional values and customs that will serve as a foundation on which to stand and build. Wisdom lies in knowing what needs to be cultivated and what needs to be discarded. Christian ministry should help to cultivate this wisdom in the church.

Practical Issues Confronting the Vietnamese

Refugees and Immigrants

Language and Skill Inadequacy

Within the new wave of immigrants and refugees, many sorts of background can be identified. Many former officers, endowed with good education, still experience difficulties adjusting to the new environment and society. Most new immigrants and refugees have not mastered the English language. The unskilled Vietnamese with language problems can only gather together in Little Saigon or similar Vietnamese communities to experience some sense of belonging. Also, it is easier to find a job in a Vietnamese restaurant or grocery store or garment factory than in an American company or business. The increasing population of Vietnamese in Orange County has created additional social problems such as unemployment, juvenile delinquency and gang fights.

Isolation and Cultural Shock

Vietnamese immigrants and refugees experience cultural shock and disappointment at the disparity between what they expected and reality. They come to America with hopes and

dreams, but they soon find out that the reality of life in America is very different from what they heard. They find it difficult to start a new life in an alien environment. They feel unqualified, inadequate and discriminated against. They notice that people here are so matter-of-fact and materialistic. Relationships become impersonal. Life is a constant rush of meaningless activities.

Vietnamese have long been stereotyped as timid and reserved. In many facets of life they find themselves alone, coping with their own problems and the reality of life. Many of them remain excluded from a society that still appears to them foreign and strange.

Former prisoners entertained dreams of starting over while waiting for freedom. But the Vietnamese community which they expected would receive them with open arms has instead left these newest refugees feeling unwelcome.²¹ Many of them feel that their compatriots who are well established in the United States no longer care to associate with them. They wonder why they paid so much in their loyalty to a war that their compatriots no longer respect, and why they dreamed so long of coming here. They feel terribly shocked and let down.

Great Expectations

Many new refugees and immigrants came to the United States with a dream. Many of them had suffered physical and

²¹ Do, A20.

emotional trauma in the re-education camps. Many were broken-hearted because of the death of relatives or broken family relationships. They came to the United States with the dream of a new life. Unfortunately, they had no real idea of what America is and what it looks like. They thought that the streets of America were paved with gold and that money grew on trees. They had no idea that the hardships and social impact would deeply affect their emotional, mental and spiritual welfare. Eventually, social pressure, personal depression, and other stresses would crush many of them. If they could have foreseen some of the realities beforehand and if they could have prepared themselves psychologically, their new lives here would now be easier.

Feelings of Failure

Many refugees and immigrants who were highly trained and experienced professionals in Vietnam became bitterly disappointed upon their arrival here. Due to the lack of appropriate credentials and licensing required, they have given up hope of practicing their professions in America. This failure tends to make them lose their self-respect and self-esteem, which in turn brings shame that is difficult to bear. They feel inferior to the native-born because of their physical appearance, confinement, and language barrier. In their families, their authority has been challenged; respect for elders has been disregarded.

Because of their language problem, parents may need to depend on their children for help even in such simple tasks as making telephone calls and answering questions.

Feelings of Loss of Identity

Vietnamese people are proud of their cultural and historical backgrounds. They treasure their traditional values and practices. It is not easy for them to abandon their past and to adopt new ways of life. Most immigrants and refugees experience tremendous stress and pressure trying to adapt to the American way of life. Many feel cut off from their roots in this process of cultural transition.

In the case of Amerasians, the identity crisis becomes more serious. In Vietnam, a person's identity issues from the father. To be without a father, therefore, robs them of a solid sense of self. The yearning to connect with their father is deeply ingrained in Amerasian children. Indeed, for many it was their main motivation for coming to the United States, the land of their fathers. But a survey of Amerasians reveals that only two percent have reunited with their fathers since arrival.²² Most Amerasians experience identity crisis in Vietnam and in their father's home land as well. "When I was in Vietnam, I felt more American because of how I looked," says one Amerasian. "But when I came here, I felt more Vietnamese. My language, the food I

²² In Our Father's Land, 14.

eat, the way I think, the way I do -- it's Vietnamese." ²³

Racism

Most Vietnamese feel tolerated but unwelcome in white society. Most refugees experience racism in all forms in this society. Resentment toward the refugees has increased as the newcomers have become more visible in factories, unemployment lines and on city streets. According to a survey, one-third of all respondents mentioned that either refugees take jobs away from Americans or they receive special treatment from the government.²⁴

Most Vietnamese refugees and immigrants have a sense of isolation living in the U. S. They have been isolated in this country because they are alienated in the white society. The isolation is due to the difference in culture, appearance and language. Vietnamese refugees will never be able to speak and write English like native Americans. This lack of communication skills hinders them from becoming an integral part of American society. Vietnamese also have a different way of thinking and a different value system. Negative attitudes towards them obviously exist where there is no common language and mutual cultural and social grounds.

Many of these issues reflect the state of mind of the

²³ Donald A. Ranard and Douglas F. Gilzou "The Amerasians," In America: Perspectives on Refugee Resettlement, June 1989: 4.

²⁴ Balwin, 83-85.

new Vietnamese immigrants and refugees, as well as their struggles in the spiritual, emotional, mental, social, and financial areas of life. In their adjustment to a new and very different culture, Amerasians or ex-prisoners experience many of the same problems that other refugees and immigrants have faced. The churches, especially Vietnamese churches, have to look at their problems in order to provide a caring ministry for the refugees which can help them to gain access to American society accurately.

CHAPTER 3

Theological Perspective for Ministry

Anyone who is serious about life speaks of some being, some center of value, some ultimate concern. One clings to and confides in something in order to give life meaning and significance. Neal F. Fisher in Context for Discovery states that "every person -- whether consciously or not -- is a theologian, for every person has some concern about life that is his or her final, or ultimate, concern."¹ To define theology in this manner is to focus on the way theology actually functions in the life of people, rather than on an abstract idea or academic scholarship. From that perspective, I view theologizing as a process in search of ultimate meaning in the push and pull of life. It is the reflection on one's understanding of God from life experience in which one believes that one has been encountered by God. Often these experiences arise in moments when one finds oneself in the extremities in life, in desperate suffering and joy, and comes to interpret one's

¹ Neal F. Fisher, Context for Discovery (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 18.

life in the context of God's presence and care.

My theological perspective for ministry was formed in the context of the Vietnamese refugees' struggle for their authentic living in the United States. This struggle for survival and for living fully is embodied in the following story which reflects the authentic experience of Vietnamese refugees. This story is rewritten from the author's experience as a refugee and is based on the sermon, "The Dandelion," by Jung Young Lee in Sermons to the Twelve.²

A Refugee's Metaphor

I am a dandelion. My ancestors lived in a countryside of a faraway country in South East Asia called Vietnam. One day, on the way home from school, a young girl picked my mum from the country side road when mum was in bloom with a brightly golden flower. The little girl kissed my mum, smelled her for a while, and then put my mum in front of her mouth and blew on her with all her breath.

As a result, my mother's womb was broken. Her children, the little white seeds, flew up in the air and then came down like parachutes. Most of her kids came down nearby, but a few of us, driven by the wind, rose higher up into the sky. I was among these brave seeds that could fly farther than others. I held my breath so as to go as far as I could. I had faith that I could find a better place to

²Jung Young Lee, Sermons to the Twelve (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 15-20.

live. As I flew up higher into the sky, I floated like a cloud. I flew over mountains, crossed the oceans and finally descended on a big continent called North America.

This was certainly a strange place for me, a dandelion seed, when I landed on the beautiful front yard of a school. I was afraid to land there, but I had no choice. I noticed that the green grasses were curious about my coming. They got somewhat excited at seeing something new among them. So I was at first delighted with their reception. However, when I started to settle down by covering myself with rich black soil, the grasses said, "You had better not settle here. You know, this place is only for us." When I heard that, I thought they were joking. I asked them, "You aren't serious, are you?" They said, "We tell you the truth; you belong at the roadside, where many wild plants grows." I countered, "I don't understand; I think everything has the right to live wherever it chooses in this land." They finally warned me, "Then you will soon know what we mean."

Regardless of what the grasses had said, I settled in the front yard of the school, covered myself with its rich soil, preparing for the cold winter in the strange land. It was really cold for me in this new land. In addition, I was homesick. But I knew that I had to struggle to survive. I need to work harder and longer to prove myself in this new place. So while the grasses in the yard were still sleeping, I was already working to root myself deeply into

the soil, and sent up my sprouts early and produced a brightly golden, round flower when the spring came. I was so proud of my flower, the only yellow flower in the whole yard. I hoped to please the eyes of the students in the school.

But one day one of the school gardeners walking by the yard discovered my presence. He came over to me and picked me. He tried to pull me out by my roots, but I was so deep in the ground that I was broken apart.

I almost died and the grasses told me, "We warned you about this. You don't belong here. Go away if you want to save your life!" I kept silent. Half of my root was already taken away. I could not go anywhere.

In spite of what had happened to me I did not lose my faith in God who had made me settle in this land. I worked harder than before to prove my value. My root grew back to full size and I again sprang up from the ground and produced a more beautiful flower. I thought the people then would be pleased with my flower which was bigger and brighter this time. But again one day, a student came by gazing at me. He approached and pulled me up. He said, "I hate to see this yellow color in this green lawn." When I heard it I realized that the reason these people hated me was because of my yellowness. I said to myself, "Then I have to conform to the green color of the grass." So I decided to stay green next spring and produced no more flower. And I

survived. But I was not happy at all. I felt crippled, and I lost the meaning of my existence. Although I was now green like the blades of grass I knew I was different from them. I could not deceive myself into being grass while by nature I was a dandelion. So during the long winter I thought and thought, and finally decided to live as I am. As the spring comes, I blossom again with my yellowness. I am still worried about my future and that of my children in this land as we continue to produce more flowers. So I pray, "Oh God, if this is also your garden and you certainly drove me here, tell the gardeners not to pull me up."

Stephen S. Kim in "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Prolegomenon to Theology of Community from an Asian-American Perspective" affirms the importance of the issue of identity in doing immigration theology.

The issue of identity is a critical one since we can do all our work and still may not have done any immigration theology at all without establishing first our clear identity, finding ourselves still within the purview of Western theology, merely affirming and confirming, and perhaps occasionally sounding our differences.... the identity issue is a critical one, because herein lies the legitimizing rationale for racism, classism, racial, ethnic, national, cultural, and ideological segregationism, but worst of all superiority complex and imperialism.³

The above story reflects my own experience and that of

³ Stephen S. Kim, "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Prolegomenon to Theology of Community from an Asian-American Perspective," Uncover the Myth, ed. Justo L. Gonzalez, Proceedings of the Roundtable of Ethnic Theologians, sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church, Cabrini Retreat Center, Des Plaines, Ill. , 20-23 Oct. 1988, 37-55.

all Vietnamese refugees and immigrants living in the United State. It also indicates the context for ministry to the Vietnamese. To minister to the Vietnamese in the U. S. I perceive the need to develop an authentic theology for ministry that helps to carry out ministerial tasks for the refugees in a strange land.

Theological Tasks for Vietnamese Ministry

I appreciate Kim's development of an Asian-American theology which can benefit the Vietnamese ministry. Kim insists that an authentic ministry of an immigrant church should be prophetic and visionary.⁴ "The prophetic role bases itself in the present, proclaiming judgments and promises, and reaching out to the future; the visionary role fixes its eyes to the future and invites the present to dream and get to work."⁵

Prophetic Ministry

Deep in my heart, as I recalled dramatic events in my life, I acknowledged that God saved me and let me leave my country for a purpose. God's grace and presence in all of the pushes and pulls of life are so real to me. This embracing love and presence of God awakened my soul and made me ready for God's call to ministry.

As I grew up during the Vietnam War, I witnessed many tragedies happening to many people. I often asked myself

⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁵ Ibid., 48.

why bad things happened to my innocent people. As I noticed the oppression, injustice and suffering of people around me, I asked myself what I, as a Christian, could do about it. In my own adverse periods of life, I experienced hardship and pain in my own being. I was not comfortable with the teaching of the church that Christians should endure social or political injustice in silence.

I came to realize that it is the prophetic task of the church to speak against all forms of oppression, injustice, and racism in the world. To carry this prophetic task, the church needs to help Vietnamese enter into American society in such a way that they can achieve complete fulfillment. They need not compromise their cultural values for materialistic and individualistic lifestyles. They need to keep their identity, their "yellowness," and let it bloom for fuller living. I need also to raise a prophetic voice of God's judgment against the seemingly subtle, but even more implicating, racism in American society. I must encourage my people to join bona fide activist movements aimed at increasing the possibilities enabling refugees to gain entry smoothly into American society. I must raise a prophetic voice against the violation of unchallengeable human rights which degrades human integrity. The goal of this ministry must be identified with the purpose of Jesus' ministry: "I came that they may have life, and have it

abundantly."⁶ In a society where the worth of individuals is diminished by racial, cultural, political, economic and social circumstances and systems, the prophetic task of the Vietnamese church is to witness to the divine image within all persons and the inclusiveness of God's love.

We must speak against all forms of discrimination and injustice that hinder the people from living with dignity and to carry out nurturing activities to help them grow into the maturity of faith, and become fuller human beings.

Visionary Ministry

The visionary role of the ministry is to build "an authentic community" in which all creation is redeemed and liberated from sin and oppression.⁷ This is a total liberation from all kinds of domination which includes social, economical, political, ethical and spiritual oppression. In a world where there are barriers to acceptance and inclusion, the ministry of the church is to break down the walls of separation and to work toward the realization of a harmonious community in which all people are interrelated, interdependent with one another and united in dependence upon their Creator.

God the Creator is the God of human history, of all cultures and creation. God has created us for wholeness --

⁶ John 10:10b. All references are to the Revised Standard Version.

⁷ Kim, 49.

fully human and interdependent. Our well-being is dependent on the well-being of all creation. Created in the image of God,⁸ we are responsible to God for the caring of God's creation in ways that will bring wholeness to all people and all of creation.

Jesus embodied the messianic promise to the poor and alienated. He began his public ministry in these words:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.⁹

Jesus Christ is proclaimed as new creation and new covenant -- an authentic human community, in which dividing walls of hostility are broken down, the far-offs are brought near, those divided are made one.¹⁰ People who follow Christ as the center of their faith must take notice of his concern for both physical and spiritual wholeness and his care for the poor and the oppressed. Jesus' teachings on economic matters reveal his concern that faith brings forth efforts for social and spiritual well-being as well.

We Vietnamese Christians acknowledge that we are part of God's creation, called to strive toward an authentic community -- the Kingdom of God. Empowered by the model of

⁸ Gen. 1:27.

⁹ Luke 4:18-19.

¹⁰ Ephesians 2.

Jesus Christ, we must analyze economic systems and their impact on justice and peace. We, an immigrant church, seek to express God's love by taking as seriously the concern for our neighbor's well-being as our own. The United States of America has been built by Western immigrants who came before us, but it does not fit us or meet our needs. Immigrant churches need to have a larger vision to build this adopted land into an inclusive community, with room for all people irrespective of their historical, cultural, and racial backgrounds.

We have a vision of a redemptive community in which all peoples and creation are liberated from all kinds of oppression or domination including social, economical, political, ethical and spiritual. We have a vision of a more fully human quality of life for all human beings. We have a vision of a loving community of human beings under God in which all age-old barriers of division are eliminated. We are called to help Vietnamese, whether they are Christians or not, to understand and experience God's grace, to realize the demand of God's call to servanthood, and to cooperate with others in the transformation of this world into a loving and caring community which can experience God's holistic redemption. In our effort to proclaim the good news of spiritual and social reconciliation we hope to help people understand God's love, understand each other, understand the purpose of creation

and their responsibility as defenders of all God's creation. Our vision is to bring people back into harmony with God and with others.

Understanding of Humanity and the Human

Need for Liberation

We perceive human beings as free persons. They have freedom to choose the way of their life. From the beginning human beings had chosen the ways that broke their relationship with God and became alienated from God and others. By nature human persons are self-willed. They have created injustice and the structure of sin in the world. The inward corruption of human nature and the injustice of social structure, manifested in oppression of humans by humans, the domination of peoples, races, or social classes, need a radical liberation. We believe Christ is the one who brings us liberation. Christ the Savior liberates from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and all injustice and oppression. Christ makes humankind truly free, that is to say, he enables us to live in communion with God; and this is the basis for all human relationship.¹¹ However, we need to translate this rational thought into collaborate action. We must be part in God's radical liberation of the world. We must struggle to move toward the creation of new humanity in a new

¹¹ Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), 103.

community of liberation from sin, and enter into communion with God and with all people.

Because the church exists in and for the world, I believe in the indivisibility of the gospel and its necessary application to all life, and for all people. It is the purpose of the church to carry out its ministry toward the transformation of this world into a "new humanity," the community where God in Christ has begun his "new creation."¹²

We believe that the life given us by God is a life in community. We can be good stewards only in close relation to our neighbors and in group relationships such as in family or in the community. Community provides the environment for nurturing and development of individuals into the fullness of their humanity. We therefore support social climates in which all human communities are maintained and strengthened.

We believe the family to be the basic human community that provides the necessary environment for the development and nurturing mutual love, respect, and fidelity. We encourage all efforts to maintain and strengthen relationships within families so that all members in the family may be assisted for growth toward the fullness of their human being and potentiality.

We believe that God is the Creator of all people. The family of God includes all people regardless of the

¹² 2 Cor. 5:17.

differences in languages, cultures or races. We therefore reject racism and affirm the worth of all persons. We demand justice and equal rights for all ethnic minorities, including the right of every religious group to exercise its faith free from all restriction. We must work toward a world in which each person's value is respected and nurtured.

My Call to the Ministry to the Refugees

The Old Testament is the story of people on the move, often immigrants and refugees. They were seekers of a better homeland. It is the story of suffering and repression, and of God's liberating action in the midst of that history. The sojourn of Ruth and the flight of Jacob and his sons to avoid famine are two significant stories related in the Old Testament. The Hebrew people, pilgrims themselves, were reminded by their leaders and prophets: "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."¹³

Jesus was a refugee when he was an infant. He and his family fled to Egypt to avoid political persecution.¹⁴ Jesus' life from that beginning was marked with uprootedness. He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his

¹³ Exod. 23:9.

¹⁴ Matt. 2:13-14.

head"¹⁵

As a follower of Jesus I am called to love: "Love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."¹⁶ Love is fulfilled in the love of the stranger and sojourner.

After the Vietnam war there were in excess of one million Vietnamese that left Vietnam and now are living in more than fifty countries around the world. They fled their country in the hope of breaking with the past--in the hope of release from captivity, suffering and oppression. The Vietnamese migrated to escape a social structure which was oppressive and hopeless, with a view of achieving their dream of living in freedom and justice. Here they hoped to live more fully human. However, the reality of racism, discrimination and isolation in the country they came to often discourages them. Many cannot feel at home living in a country that is hostile to them.

Psychologically, Vietnamese refugees experienced a lot of suffering as a result of the war, the trauma of their departure, the life in re-education and refugee camps, with all the resultant separation, grief and loss. In addition, the Vietnamese arriving in the United States have faced new problems, such as housing, unemployment, and cultural differences, language barriers, discrimination and racism.

¹⁵ Matt. 8:20.

¹⁶ John 12:34-35.

As a result of the need to adjust to a new society, many try to conform to American ways of life which conflict with their own values. As a result they do not feel at home and cannot experience a full life in the country they dreamed about. Recent immigrants are experiencing major relational difficulties. They now have problems in the relationship between husband and wife, and between parents and children. All of these issues raise the question for an authentic ministry of the church which can promote human wholeness and build up a harmonious community.

A Theology of Culture for Ministry

A well known Vietnamese folktale called "Su Tich Banh Day Banh Chung" (The Tale of Day and Chung Cakes), transmitted from an early dynasty of Vietnam, has been told as follows: [Under the dynasty of Hung Vuong The Sixth, after the victory over the An invasion, the king wanted to pass his throne to one of his twenty sons. In the first day of Tet, the Lunar New Year celebration of the Vietnamese, the king summoned the national cabinet and the royal family and said to them, "I am an old king and I don't know the day of my death. Now it is time for all of you to go out and seek for me the most significant and tasty food and bring it to me. I will pass my throne to anyone who can offer me the most significant and tastiest food to eat."

All of the princes eagerly searched out this rarest and most delicious food for the king in the hopes of winning the

throne. Lang Leo, the eighteenth prince of Hung Vuong, was a gentle and pious prince. He had no one to instruct him about the contest because his mother had passed away earlier. As he worried about what to do, an angel came to him in a dream and said, "Nothing on the earth is more precious than rice -- the food that gives life to humanity. From the sticken rice, you should make square cakes which symbolize the earth, and round cakes which symbolize the heavens. You wrap the cakes outside with banana leaves and put meat inside to symbolize the parents who gave you birth and nurtured you."

Lang Leo woke up, happy to follow the angel's instructions. He used the best sticken rice to make square cakes, wrapped them, cooked them in a pot and called them banh chung (baked cake). He also ground the sticken rice into powder to make round cakes which symbolize the heavens. He put meat inside the cakes and wrapped them outside with banana leaves to symbolize the parents. He called these cakes banh day (full cake).

On the day of the contest, while other princes brought the rarest and the most delicious food in the country to the king, Lang Leo offered these rice cakes to the king. The king was astonished and asked the eighteenth prince why in the world he would do such a thing. Lang Leo sincerely told the king about the angel's instructions and the significance of the cakes. The king ate the cakes, and then proudly

praised: "They are so delicious and so profoundly significant in meaning." He then passed his throne on Lang Leo.

Since this event, every year during Tet the Vietnamese people make banh chung and banh day to offer God and their ancestors. They also serve these cakes at weddings and funeral feasts].¹⁷

This well-known folktale in the Vietnamese tradition can be used as a parable for doing theology in the Vietnamese culture. Banh day banh chung resounds a profound religious belief and the most cherished value of the Vietnamese people. There are three things in this tale to consider: God, the earth of human community, and the family. The common Vietnamese believe in Troi, and they practice their worship by praying and presenting offerings to Troi. The meaning of the banh chung in the square shape, and its traditional use as an offering to Troi (to be shared together as a Tet meal) signify the people's profound belief in Troi. Banh day is wrapped outside with banana leaves and meat is inserted between two pieces of round cake to signify parents. The word day in banh day means "fullness" which denotes the fullness of parents' love embracing the children symbolized by the meat, and the round shape of the cake symbolizes the completeness, roundness, or harmonious

¹⁷ Mien Trong Hoang, Viet Nam Van Hoc Toan Thu [A complete anthology of the Vietnamese literature], vol. 2 (Saigon: Quoc Hoa, 1986), 76.

living of people of the human community. The Vietnamese take chu hieu (filial piety), family and personal honor very seriously. From the Vietnamese perspective, worshiping Troi and faithfulness to Troi thus embrace living harmoniously in the human community, honoring and serving parents. Troi, the human community, and family are highly honored in Vietnamese culture.

C. S. Song defines theology as a human activity derived from divine initiatives within the world.¹⁸ He believes that God's involvement with the world did not stop in Jewish culture where God took human form in Jesus Christ. God must have established very close relationships with every culture and its history.¹⁹ In that respect, Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese history must be theological inherently. Doing theology and ministry for the Vietnamese then need to be developed from the womb of Vietnam with a profound belief in God, love of the human community and respectful love of parents. Stephen S. Kim indicates the importance of doing theology in the context of the culture of its ministry as he says,

The task of theology is to articulate the absolute with terms that are not at all absolute; to define God's absolute truth which transcends all the historical, social, and ideological variables (prophetic), but

¹⁸ C. S. Song, Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 11.

¹⁹ Ibid.

which is still relevant and redeeming (pastoral).²⁰

The Vietnamese church exists to serve God's mission to the world, particularly to the Vietnamese in the Vietnamese context of its culture. The Vietnamese church in Vietnam and abroad needs to develop a kind of Vietnamese theology which can help enlarge the vision of God and God's mission and serve as guidance for the ministry of the church in Vietnam and in the world.

The World Mission and Evangelism Commission held in Melbourne, Australia, in 1980 affirmed, "Our mission is to proclaim the Word of God, to name the Name of Jesus Christ, that all humanity may respond to the call our Lord presents and turn to him."²¹ To name the name of Jesus Christ in Vietnamese culture or to develop a theology of culture is an important task for the Vietnamese church.

Anh Duy Dao points out the Christian view of traditional and folk faith and practices as against the long-time ethics and cultural values of the Vietnamese. He says it is the main reason for suspicion of the Christian church in Vietnam.²² Because God is believed and honored in the Vietnamese culture, a religion worshipping God like Christianity is not strange to the Vietnamese people.

²⁰ Kim, 47.

²¹ Song, 91.

²² Dao, 224.

Christianity entered Vietnam in the fourteenth century²³ and began to expand under the conquest and colonization of France in the eighteenth century and modernization and imperialism in the nineteenth century.²⁴ Anh Duy Dao observed that the majority of believers in the early period of Christianity in Vietnam converted to Christianity for personal interests rather than because of religious faith.²⁵ It is evident that Western individualistic Christianity has long neglected the problem of social injustice, even within the church. Although the Roman Catholic church had been involved in social activities among the poor, it had tied itself to the colonial structure to strengthen its influence, and ignored the political and social injustice in society. The Christian Missionary Alliance, that first brought Protestantism into Vietnam in 1911,²⁶ held a clear-cut separation between the society and the church. The Church has divorced herself from the economic and political situation of the country. The Christian church in general has become callous and insensitive to the sufferings of the masses.

Protestantism remains small in numbers and is not

²³ Anh Toan, Tin Nguong Viet Nam [Religions in Vietnam], vol. 2 (Lancaster, Pa.: Xuan Thu, 1985), 18.

²⁴ Ibid., 18-24.

²⁵ Dao, Viet Nam Van Hoa Su Cuong 224.

²⁶ Ibid., 79.

popular in Vietnam. I believe the main reason for the ineffectiveness of the Christian church in Vietnam is due to its theological assumption which presumes evangelism as the only ministry of the church. The social, economic, and political situations of the Vietnamese people have never been addressed since Protestantism came to Vietnam 80 years ago. More than that, the ministry of the Vietnamese church has been carried on through Western ways of thinking which condemn cultural expressions of belief in, or respect for God or ancestors as superstition or idol worship. The gospel could not access the heart of the people when Christians have isolated themselves within a religious circle, calling and treating the unchurched as nguai ngoai (the outsiders).

Over centuries, traditional Christian theology has developed intricate doctrines about God. The primary contents of the traditional Christian theology restricted itself to the trinitarian God, the church, the sacraments, and ministry, while a great part of that which has to do with human life was almost disregarded. This kind of theology has proved to be very restrictive and impractical.²⁷ It is illogical to reflect on God's love, salvation or judgment in the content of hard realities in life from the perspective of traditional Christian theology. "Christians see no 'theological' implications in 'boat

²⁷ Song, 6.

people' from Vietnam fighting to get to shore and step on dry land."²⁸

I appreciate C. S. Song for his remark that our theology must begin with humanity because it is with humanity that God is theologically engaged: "We are not expected to do theology for God. What God requires of us is theology for us human beings."²⁹ "Humanity to theology is something like water to fish. Fish die when taken out of water. Theology dies when divorced from life and history."³⁰

Traditional Christian theology of Protestantism has proved ineffective to approach Vietnamese society in the past 80 years. Serious discussion of problems of the Vietnamese Christian church and its ministry in Vietnam lies outside the scope of this thesis. I hope a theology for the Vietnamese ministry in Vietnam, a theology which comes out from the womb of Vietnam, will soon be developed by Vietnamese scholars in Vietnam or abroad. I believe such development will be beneficial for the effective communication of the gospel in Vietnamese society.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 10.

³⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

A Theology of Dan Chung

In The Minister and the Care of Souls, Daniel Day Williams says, "The pastor must be a theologian, and the kind of practical theologian who can keep theological concepts in significant relation to human experience."¹ This means that the pastor needs to have a practical theology for ministry in order to present people with an understanding of the world, of God and human nature, in such a way that it is in accord with knowledge, real to experience, and effective in relation to the important issues of life. Theology is practical when it enables believers to interpret their life experience in an understanding of God and of the world in accordance with reality, so that they can utilize that understanding in action.

This chapter explores a theology of Vietnamese dan chung in the discussions of Troi, the issues of kho and han of dan chung, and the resolution of kho and han from dan

¹ Daniel Day Williams, The Minister and the Care of Souls (New York: Harper, 1961), 104.

chung's perspective.

Troi

Although Vietnamese culture is strongly influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism, neither Confucius nor Buddha is the highest deity for the Vietnamese believer. On the contrary, the Vietnamese people have a profound belief in Troi. In exclamatory expressions, people often use the phrase "Troi Phat oi!" expressing surprise, pain, and wishes. They place Troi above Buddha (Phat).

In Vietnamese culture, Troi is acknowledged and worshipped by the common people. The folk belief in Troi is heard in daily expressions of Vietnamese conversation. People commonly use the word Troi when talking about the weather, as in: Troi mua which means "Troi makes it rain," instead of "It's raining"; Troi nang, "Troi makes it sunny;" Troi nong, "Troi makes it hot;" and so on. Vietnamese people also use many common daily expressions like nho Troi ("By the grace of Troi") and Troi cuu ("Troi saved us") to express their appreciation to Troi for what has happened in their lives or for what they hope for in the future.

The fundamental Vietnamese belief in Troi is evidenced clearly in their cultural heritage of proverbs and folk sayings. The following are samples of Vietnamese proverbs which exemplify the people's profound belief in Troi: Troi is loving-pity and loving-kindness; Troi knows everything;

Troi punishes and rewards.

Lay Troi mua xuong, [May Troi gives rain]
 Lay nuoc toi uong, [I have water to drink]
 Lay ruong toi cay [I can plough my rice-field]
 Lay bac com day, [I can have my full bowl of rice]
 Lay khuc ca to.² [I can have a big slice of fish]

Troi oi cho chua toi giao [Oh Troi, make my lord rich]
 Cho toi hut mo an dau quanh nam, [so that I can have
 fat and oil the year round]
 Lay troi cho chua toi hoang [Oh Troi, make my lord
 lavish]
 Cho toi mac vong nghen nhang ngay.³ [so I can
 rest myself on the hammock the whole day]

Troi cho cay cay day dong [By Troi's grace, rice
 fields are full of farmers]
 Xu nao xu nay trong long vui ghe [By Troi's grace,
 people are happy in all the hamlets]
 Mot mai gat lua dem ve [as they bring sheaves of rice
 home]
 Tho cha kinh me nhieu be hieu trung.⁴ [to honor and
 give respect to parents]

They challenge Troi over the injustice in society:

Troi oi o chang cong [Oh Troi, it's not fair!]
 Ngoai an khong het, ngoai lam khong ra. [One has too
 much to eat; another works and has nothing]
 Troi oi! sinh giac lam chi, [Oh Troi, why do you cause
 war?]
 Cho chong toi phai di ra chien truong.⁵ [causing my
 husband to enter the battle field]

They believe in Troi's grace and blessing, and the judgment
 of the wicked by Troi's power:

Troi cho ai nay nen [Troi gives to those who prosper]
 Troi khien ai nay mat [Troi decides who loses]
 O loi soi Troi goi cho [Troi gives to the generous]

² Ngoc Van Nguyen, Tuc Ngu Phong Dao [Folk sayings and
 proverbs] (Glendale, Calif.: Dai Nam, 1989), 124.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 217.

⁵ Ibid.

O bo bo Troi lay lai.⁶ [Troi takes away the miser]
 Ngam hay muon su tai Troi [Troi decides everything
 that happens]
 Troi kia bat phai lam nguoi co than [Troi predestines
 a human being's fate]
 Bat phong tran phai phong tran [If Troi wants you to
 suffer, you suffer]
 Cho thanh cao moi duoc phan thanh cao.⁷ [If Troi
 gives you gentleness, you're gentle]

Troi and God

Troi is the Vietnamese folk deity who is the creator and sovereign God of all creation.

The Vietnamese personify Troi as Ong Troi (Mister Troi). This Troi is not up there on Olympus, like the Greek gods. They believe Troi is not deaf or blind or indifferent, but is the One who hears and sees and cares for people who suffer. They cry out to Troi in lamentation, like "Troi oi co thay khong!" [Oh Troi, do you see our suffering!]; or "Troi oi la Troi! tai sao toi kho nhu the nay?" [Oh Troi, Oh Troi! Why do I have to endure this pain?"] They express their trust and hope in Troi through expression like Troi biet (Troi knows), Troi nghe (Troi hears), Troi cho (Troi gives), and Troi cuu (Troi saves us).

In Vietnamese culture Troi is believed as a folk faith. The Vietnamese do not have a formal Troi religion. They do not worship Troi in temples with rituals. They do not have

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Du Nguyen, Truyen Thuy Kieu [The story of Thuy-Kieu] (Saigon: Dai Nam, 1968), 208.

priests. Traditionally, most Vietnamese families build an altar to Troi, called Ban tho Ong Thien in front of their houses. They burn fragrant incense sticks and pray in front of God's altar in the evening. Deep in their hearts is a profound belief in the supreme heavenly Troi.

The Vietnamese believe in Troi as the Creator of the world, of human beings and of all creation. This belief is manifested in expressions like "Troi sinh, Troi duong" [Troi gives life, Troi nurtures it], and "Troi sinh voi sinh co" [Troi creates the elephant, so Troi creates grass].

In this Vietnamese concept, Troi is the Judge of all mankind, the One who punishes and rewards, whose wisdom, goodness, and love sustain all things.

This does not vary much from the Hebrew writers who affirmed that Yahweh is the Creator of the universe and the Maker and Judge of all human beings: Yahweh is "the Creator of the ends of the earth."⁸ It is Yahweh who "teaches men knowledge."⁹ It is Yahweh who calls up the generations of men, and shows his loving kindness to thousands.¹⁰ "His judgments are in all the earth"¹¹; yet "mercy and truth are met together."¹²

⁸ Isa. 40:28.

⁹ Ps. 94:10.

¹⁰ Exod. 20:6.

¹¹ 1 Chron. 16:14.

¹² Ps. 85:10.

Troi's attributes in Vietnamese notions are similar to that of God by Christians: eternity, holiness, love, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, righteousness, sovereignty and truth.

However, the Troi of the Vietnamese is a Being which exists in people's realization and faith. The Christian God is different from Troi in God's revelation and active involvement in human history to save. The first and decisive revelation of God in the Bible is that God cares for people who suffer, for little people, for slaves, for the poor and the oppressed. Yahweh said to Moses, "I have seen the affliction of my people... and have heard their cry... I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey."¹³ God descends to the depths of our condition and our suffering to save. The Christian God is a liberating one who, in the person of the incarnate Christ, identifies with the poor, the oppressed, and the suffering.

Our Christian God is the one who has taken the initiative in revealing Himself to human beings, and has told us God's purposes and what God requires of those who would serve Him. God sent prophets and wise men to declare God's will and finally sent God's only Son to be the Savior

¹³ Exod. 3:7-8.

of all who believe in Him and follow his way of life.

Christians believe that the revelation of God is full and complete in Jesus Christ. In the Vietnamese cultural context, the people's fundamental belief in Troi (Troi's justice, Troi's destiny, Troi's love, Troi's caring and Troi's saving) can be utilized to bring to life God's salvation story in Jesus Christ.

Kho and Han

Politically, Vietnamese dan chung have for centuries suffered tremendously from foreign invasions, occupation, intervention, wars, state divisions, and international imperialism. To a certain extent, individually and collectively, Vietnamese people have experienced kho and han.

The term kho is a common utterance cried out by the Vietnamese expressing intolerable suffering, pain, physical and emotional distress caused by forces beyond their control.

The word han is another Vietnamese lamentation expressing anger, bitterness, grief, hatred. It also denotes the broken-heartedness of individuals or peoples who are exploited and oppressed. Kho and han are a controlling feeling of pain and defeat, and also a tenacity of will for life which comes to weaker beings.

In brief, Kho and Han are two Vietnamese words depicting the feelings of suffering and dissatisfaction, the

cries of anger, bitterness, grief and broken-heartedness of individuals or peoples against injustice, exploitation and oppression.

Kho and han are experienced both individually and collectively in Vietnamese society. In an individual, it is expressed in the feeling of repression, resentment and anger; or it remains unconscious in bitterness and anxiety. In society, kho and han are experienced in collective rage and rebellion against dominating forces.

Dan Chung

The word dan chung is a compound Vietnamese noun composed of dan meaning "people" and chung meaning "the mass." Dan chung is a compound noun derived from two Chinese characters dan and chung with the same meaning. In the social-political context of Vietnam history, dan chung were the common people who suffered from foreign forces that oppressed, exploited, and kept them under the yoke of slavery.

To understand the dan chung, it is necessary to identify them in the social-political context of Vietnamese history. I will therefore present a brief history of Vietnam, discuss the kho and han of Vietnamese dan chung, and reflect on the resolution of kho and han among the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants.

A Brief History of Vietnam

Vietnam, along with its neighbors in the Indochinese

Peninsula, has been subjected to the influence of China and India to an almost equal degree. Joseph Buttinger, one of the foremost American authors on Vietnam's history, notes:

Indian traders and priests have contributed to the development of Indochinese civilization as much as Chinese moral philosophers, Chinese conquerors, and Chinese political administrators. Religion, philosophy, art, and political organization show the cultural predominance of either India or China over this territory for some two thousand years.¹⁴

Politically, the name Vietnam has a long history closely related to the political evolution of the nation, for it has appeared in various names since the third century. In 207 B.C. Trieu Da called his kingdom Dai Viet. The Chinese conquered and ruled it between 111 B. C. and A. D. 938, calling it Giao Chi and finally An Nam. On recovering its independence, the nation took three names under five dynasties: Dai Co Viet under the Dinh and Le Dynasty (968-1009); Dai Viet under Ly and Tran (1010-1400); and Dai Ngu under Ho (1400-1407). The name An Nam was used again by Chinese Ming who reoccupied the country from 1407 to 1427. Le Loi liberated the territory from the Ming's domination and founded a dynasty that lasted from 1428 to 1788. From 1802 to 1945 the Nguyen Dynasty adopted the name Viet Nam. It was during this dynasty that Vietnam was

¹⁴ Joseph Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon (New York: Frederick Preager, 1958), 11.

gradually subdued by French conquerors. Vietnam became a French colony in 1867, and in 1883 the country was merged with Laos and Cambodia to form French Indochina. The Yen Bay uprising, led by the non-Communist VNQDD National Movement formed in 1927, marked the beginning of the modern Vietnamese struggle against the French. In the same year, the Vietnamese and later Indochinese Communist Party was formed in Hong Kong under the leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc, later named Ho Chi Minh. In 1939 the non-Communist Dai Viet Party was formed by Truong Tu Anh, and began organizing in northern and central Vietnam. During this period a number of nationalist organizations were also active in the South.¹⁵ With the collapse of France in 1940, the French regime yielded Indochina to the Japanese who set up an administration under Emperor Bao Dai.¹⁶

Following Japan's surrender, Ho Chi Minh (communist leader of the "Viet Minh," a political organization that struggled for the independence of Vietnam), proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi in 1945. At the same time, British General Douglas Gracey arrived in Saigon and prepared to return power to the French. The later subsequently conducted a military campaign, reconquering southern Vietnam and Cambodia. French resistance to the

¹⁵ Al Santoli, ed., To Bear Any Burden (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 334.

¹⁶ Kim Trong Tran, Viet Nam Su Luoc [The history of Vietnam in brief] (Saigon: Tan Viet, 1964), 21-52.

Viet Minh led to a war that lasted eight years, from 1946 to 1954. A ceasefire agreement was signed after the victory of the Viet Minh over the French at Dien Bien Phu in May, 1954.¹⁷ On July 21, 1954, the Geneva Accords proclaimed an end to hostilities in Indochina. This agreement provisionally partitioned Vietnam along the 17th parallel, pending general elections to bring about the unification of the country. However, these elections were never held because the South, with the support of the United States, proclaimed itself the Republic of Vietnam with Ngo Dinh Diem as president and with its capital at Saigon. The anti-Communist regime in the South was opposed by a growing resistance movement. So in 1961 the United States directly joined the war between North and South Vietnam, deploying large ground forces in the South and carrying out bombing attacks against the North from 1965 to 1968. Peace negotiations led to the Paris Peace Agreement in 1973 and the U. S. forces withdrew from Vietnam.¹⁸

However, the Vietnam War continued for another two years until Hanoi, in a massive offensive, swept through to the gates of Saigon. President Nguyen Van Thieu of the South Vietnamese government resigned and was replaced by General Duong Van Minh, who announced the unconditional

¹⁷ Santoli, 334-37.

¹⁸ Ibid., 337-47.

surrender of the South in April 1975. Since the collapse of the South, several waves of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants have fled their homeland to countries overseas. In the ten years after the fall of South Vietnam, it is estimated that two million refugees have survived and 200,000 Vietnamese have died at sea.¹⁹

Kho and Han of the Vietnamese Refugees

There is no doubt that the roots of kho and han of the Vietnamese dan chung lay in centuries of intolerable slavery from foreign invasions, occupation and intervention.

"Mother's Heritage" is a popular Vietnamese song written by Trinh Cong Son during the Vietnam War and sung during the war by soldiers and young people. It depicts the kho and han of the Vietnamese dan chung:

One thousand years under the slavery of Chinese forces;
One hundred years under the yoke of the French army;
Thirty years of civil war combating day and night;
The heritage of the Vietnamese Mother is heaps of dry bones and rows of graves.

Of all the wars in the history of Vietnam, no war has produced more tragic consequences than the thirty years war of 1945-1975. It ended after the killing of about 2 million Vietnamese, and the injuring of another 4 million soldiers and civilians, adults and children, leaving them with some handicap or disability which they had to bear for the rest of their lives. The war also caused major hopelessness, and the desolation of most cultivated areas.

¹⁹ Ibid., 349.

- During this war children were born under the thunder of bombers. They grew up in battlefields, and experienced life through destruction. Almost every Vietnamese person has experienced the war-related loss of a family member, of a relative or friend. Today the bitter feelings of the Vietnamese are directed not only against the French who dominated the country for 20 years, but also against the Americans who have never directly ruled their country. What the Vietnamese dan chung have learned from their suffering experience is that there are forces that have fettered them such as international structures, political pressures, imperialistic interests, military gravitation, and so on. It helps us to understand that imperialism is not reduced to territorial conquest but has to do as well with economic boycott and political control.

A Vietnamese man once expressed the han of his people towards the American invaders as "Vietnamese fighting against strangers" in that war. A stranger intrudes into the privacy of your home, and you are forced to fight against him in your own house. After the fighting, the stranger leaves your house a pile of ruins and disaster. Many Vietnamese soldiers and Amerasians trumpet their han on their skin.²⁰ The word and picture tattooed on chest and hands proclaim their deep grief and resentment towards the

²⁰ Gail Fisher, "Amerasians: Looking for GI Dads," Los Angeles Times, 30 June 1991: A28-29.

oppressor or unjust society. Physically and emotionally, the kho and han of the war lives on for generations after guns and bombs have been silenced.

It was a tragedy when U. S. soldier killed 182 women, 174 children and 60 old people in a small commune in the remote village of Son My, Quang Ngai province on March 16, 1968. More than 1,000 dan chung in My Lai gathered in the drizzle at a stone memorial to the victims 20 years after this massacre. They laid wreaths and lit incense sticks in remembrance of the innocent.²¹ It is obvious th the crimes by foreign invaders imprints the horrors, grief and hatred on the memory of the Vietnamese dan chung for generations.

Today, 17 years after the war, the napalm is no longer dropped, but the U. S. continues to fight by other means: economic boycotts, trade policies, diplomatic exclusion -- all aimed at isolating and further punishing Vietnam. The theory holds that such punishment will compel the Vietnamese government to change its ways but, in reality, it generates more factors for the han and suffering of the people.

On the other hand, the Vietnamese government has tried to consolidate its power. The present regime treats its internal opponents like criminals. This policy of hatred and discrimination has caused the departure of more than one million people. More than 200,000 persons, mostly officials

²¹ John Rogers, "Vietnamese Villagers Mourn My Lai Tragedy," Orange County Register, 17 Mar. 1993: A13.

and soldiers of the former regime, have been detained in the re-education camps, where hard labor is the norm. The government still maintains close surveillance over religious groups.

The tragedy has been painful for those who chose to flee Vietnam, as thirty per cent of those who left by boat did not reach shore. Vietnamese refugees have often been attacked by Thai pirates. They are stripped of wrist watches and boat engines. Some refugees have been robbed two and three times. Others have been beaten and raped right in front of their families. The pirates have forced men to undress, stealing all their goods, then kicking them into the water and hitting them into drowning. Subsequently, it is normally the women's turn to be subjected to intimate search. Then the pirates would carry off the young women and girls. They are pulled from the arms of their children and are passed as sex slaves from fishing boat to fishing boat. On several occasions, entire boatloads of refugees have been dumped into the sea and left to drown when pirates rammed and shattered their boats. Most "boat people" survived with "han," with physical and emotional wounds that can never be entirely healed.

Lyn was an unaccompanied teenager sent off by her parents in Saigon to seek a better life. She arrived in Thailand raped, beaten and stripped of her belongings. Lyn seemed to be assimilated into America society with little

difficulty. Her appearance helped her fit into the crowd, and she achieved excellent report cards. The following letter, however, written to the former director of the Center for Unaccompanied Women in the refugee camp, reveals what she appears to be as contrasted with what she really is.

Dear Eve,

I'm a bad test taker. I can never take my mind off what happened on the boat, and concentrate on the test. I was so sensitive about pregnancy, birth, abortion and death. That makes my flesh creep. Two years ago I thought I would make my life in the U. S. new and clean. But I was wrong, Eve. I always feel guilty. That's when my inferiority complex began. I'm not as strong as you might think. It is just my mask.

A lot of times I wake up at midnight. I think I am in that damp cold and stinky cave with my heart almost stopped because of the rattling sound from that man. It obsesses me. I can still hear it. I feel it so vividly whenever I close my eyes. But I think it was my problem, my fault, so I don't want to talk about it. I don't want people to feel sorry for me or to despise me.

Sometimes I am just like a wild animal. I want to tear up all the books and break down the walls around me. But I have to control it somehow. Then I sob. I look out at the invisible space. It always listens and never says anything; it just satisfies me. I'm so confused when I talk about this experience.

Eve, I'm sorry to bother you. You're right. I must keep busy.²²

This young, brilliant girl continues in school and is praised by her teachers. But they never understand; never grasp her *kho* and *han*.

In addition, the Vietnamese refugees who survive the escape may have to wait for years in crowded, close refugee

²² Eve Burton, "The Women's Center," To Bear Any Burden, ed. Al Santoli (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 304-05.

camps. Refugees who have no immediate family in the U. S. have little chance of resettlement. They live with dim hope and constant pain.

Most recent Vietnamese refugees and immigrants to the U. S. are the Amerasians and former political prisoners who endured tremendous hardship, suffering, and discrimination in Vietnam. As soon as they arrive in the U. S., they face a lot of problems, including discrimination and racism, which isolate them in the land of their dreams. The refugees are the Vietnamese dan chung. Their kho is apparent; their han caused by the war, by the oppressor, remains deep inside their being, even in the country of their dreams for permanent settlement.

Resolution of Kho and Han

Faith in Troi

The Vietnamese dan chung have a strong belief in Troi, especially in Troi's justice. They believe that Troi is on the side of the poor and oppressed dan chung. Such a belief is expressed in the daily folk saying such as, "Troi cao co mat," [the heavenly God has eyes], or "Troi khong phu nguoi ngay," [God never fails the just],

The Vietnamese dan chung believe that Troi intervene in his time to save "the kho" and "the han." They comfort others or themselves with sayings such as,

Con troi con dat con non nuoc [Heaven remains planet
earth remains mountains and seas remain]
Co le ta dau mai the nay. [our lives perhaps won't be
like this forever]

Sau con mua Troi lai sang. [Troi makes it sunny after the rain],

Het con bi cuc toi hoi thoi lai. [The time of affliction ends, the period of prosperity arrives.]

Their belief in Troi assures them that the gloom of night does not have absolute dominion over their life or their country. A sunrise of happiness will come out of the night of kho and han.

Faith in Troi of the Vietnamese dan chung is not a passive belief but a dynamic one. That faith has inspired them to struggle against the political powers that had dominated and enslaved them throughout their history. The first declaration of the Vietnamese movement against French domination in Vietnam was an open letter written by a number of Vietnamese intellectuals in Go Cong to the French colonists in 1862. It voiced an unyielding spirit of dan chung to the oppressors, as well as their strong faith in Troi's justice.

[No longer under the leadership of our king, we feel sad and grieved, as if we had lost our parents... If you deliberately impose domination on our country, there will be no end of trouble. We continue to resist in accordance to Troi's destiny and ultimately will win for sure. If you want peace, give us back our king and the territory you have appropriated. We are fighting towards that end. We know you are powerful, but we fear Troi's destiny more than your might. We vowed to fight continuously, without rest. If we lose everything and have nothing to fight for, we will cut down tree branches with which to arm our soldiers. So how can you survive among us? We sincerely ask that you hear our appeal, and call an end to this situation,

unfavorable both to your interests and to ours].²³

Under the oppression of colonialism and imperialism, when war brought tragic destruction to individuals, families and the entire country, faith in Troi of dan chung helped sustain life and hope in the future. Faith in Troi imparts strength to live by and the courage to hope that even dan chung might be overwhelmed by intolerable suffering, despair and death.

Is not the faith of dan chung in Troi that will return to us the bright sunshine after the dark of the rain the message of God's creation, when He made the light and separated it from the darkness as recorded in Genesis? Is not the faith of dan chung in Troi, whose justice and love will be prevail, the same as Jesus' message about the reign of God? I believe so. The vision of tomorrow in the Vietnamese dan chung is a vision of faith in Troi. Armed with that faith, they can live in hope even in the midst of pain and despair. And with that faith they can work together with others towards becoming part of the redemptive force of God's love to make the fulfillment of God's reign on earth as it is in heaven.

Christian faith need to be shared to the Vietnamese dan chung in their cultural folk-faith context. In this way the gospel can be understood and accepted without any loss of

²³ Trung Chanh Ly, Tim Ve Dan Toc [Going back to our roots]. (Saigon: Lua Thieng, 1972), 92-93.

identity on the part of the believers. The starting point is the belief that there is only one God and that this God desires the salvation for all. This implies that God has established a relationship with all people on earth, whether we are aware of this or not. We may call God by many names but God is and remains the one God for all human beings on earth. The fact is that dan chung may acknowledge and worship the one true God, but they do not know God's true identity. They may know God's law and justice but not of God's grace. Christianity is a universal faith. The historical event in which God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ represents a unique and absolute truth which Vietnamese Christians have to tell their people.

Dismantlement of the Oppressive Structure

The Exodus in the Old Testament and the Crucifixion-Resurrection in the New Testament are the paradigm of God's intervention to liberate the dan chung.

Church history also gives paradigms to understanding the doctrine of the Millennium as the historical Kingdom of God, or of the Holy Spirit as intrinsic God dwelling in humanity,²⁴ especially in the social reformation advocated by Muentzer who perceived the need for revolutionary action. "Muentzer believed that under an oppressive system the image of God and man would be distorted, so that man cannot speak

²⁴ Ibid., 161-65.

correctly of God in a situation of oppression."²⁵

The social-political hermeneutics of dan chung theology point out that in the Old Testament, God highly valued the poor and the oppressed, and took them in as objects of his defense and liberation; and in the New Testament, the objects of Jesus' mission were ochlos, the common people or dan chung. Christ too came and ate with sinners and tax collectors, and worked for the sick, the poor, the oppressed and the alienated, giving them new direction and hope.

Kho and Han of dan chung is caused by the wrongdoing of the oppressors toward God and their neighbors. Kho and Han is the grief experienced by the victimized dan chung. In most cases, personal kho and han always relates with collective kho and han resulted by political domination, economic exploitation, cultural discrimination. In Vietnam collective han is caused by patriarchy, hierarchy, and foreign occupation and intervention. In Vietnamese-American context, kho is caused by racism and injustice.

According to Gustavo Gutierrez, the root of a situation of injustice is Sin, which is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of fellowship and love among persons.²⁶ Sin is evident in oppression structures.

Sin is a rejection of friendship with God and, in consequence, with other human beings. It is a personal, free act by which we refuse to accept the

²⁵ Ibid., 165.

²⁶ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 103.

gift of God's love. As seen in the light of faith, sin thus understood is the root of all social injustice, because sin, like every human act, necessarily has a social dimension. This accounts for the expressions "sinful situation" and "social sin."²⁷

Thus sin includes the oppression of humans by humans, the domination of peoples, races, or social classes. Sin demands a radical liberation, and Christ is the one who brings us this liberation.

Christ the Savior liberates from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and all injustice and oppression. Christ makes humankind truly free, that is to say, he enables us to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human relationship.²⁸

Liberation from sin is radical because sin is the root of all oppression, both in its individual and social dimensions. Positively speaking, this radical liberation is the gift offered by Christ in communion with God and with other people. The grace of Christ alone can penetrate to this root.²⁹

God in the fullness of time sends his Son in the flesh, so that he might come to liberate all men from all slavery to which sin has subjected them: hunger, misery, oppression, and ignorance, in a word, that injustice and hatred which have their origin in human

²⁷ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 226, footnote 101. See also Gustavo Gutierrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 97-99.

²⁸ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 25.

²⁹ Ibid., 226, footnote 101. See also F. Moreno, Teologia moral desde los pobres (Madrid: Instituto Superior de Ciencias Sociales, 1986), 126-38 as cited in Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 226.

selfishness.³⁰

It is clear that what Gutierrez calls liberation is nothing other than salvation. To be saved is to be open to God and to others. It is the communion of human beings with God and with other people. Liberation embraces all human reality; it transforms and leads all creation to its fullness in Christ.

The center of God's salvific design is Jesus Christ, who by his death and resurrection transforms the universe and makes it possible for the person to reach fulfillment as human being. This fulfillment embraces every aspect of humanity: body and spirit, individual and society, person and cosmos, time and eternity.³¹

From that perspective, kho and han can be solved first by the dismantlement of the sinful structure highlighted by liberation theology, which is the root cause of dan chung's grief.

Troi Embraces Our Pain

Third World theology sees God as really affected by the world, and as the fellow-sufferer who understands, is able to offer a more meaningful interpretation of the suffering and the love of God than does traditional theology.

Our theology has also to be a weeping theology. We see too much misery around us -- endless wars, bottomless poverty, cruel suppression of human rights. We hear God weep, lament, and sigh.³²

To the question, "Where is God when we go through our

³⁰ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 103.

³¹ Ibid., 85.

³² Song, 10.

unexplainable suffering?" the answer is that God is present in that pain with us, and God in pain is the God who resolves our human pain by his own. Jesus is the Lord who heals our human wounds by his own.³³ God in the gospel is the One who resolves our pain and heals our wounds.

Kazo Kitamori in Theology of the Pain of God states that salvation is the message that our God enfolds in our broken reality. "This all-embracing God resolves our pain and heals our wounds."³⁴

God himself was broken, was wounded, and suffered, because he embraced thou who should not be embraced. By embracing our reality, God grants us absolute peace.³⁵

The awareness of God in pain with us often serves to lend strength and courage to the person facing pain. We are not alone in our pain. God is here with us in this moment of experience. Such a faith can help us overcome bitterness and isolation in suffering.

God, incarnate in Jesus the Christ is not so much the one who suffers and dies for us, but the one who suffers and dies with us. Vicarious suffering and death for us is replaced by identification with us and the world in suffering and death.... Whatever Asian-Americans have experienced and will continue to experience is not inconsequential because it was and is God's suffering. This is the God from whom we receive power and hope.... This power and hope that came to us through a God who suffers with us is rooted in love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only son."

³³ 1 Peter 2:24.

³⁴ Kazo Kitamori, Theology of the Pain of God (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1965), 20-21.

³⁵ Ibid., 22.

(John 3:16) Such love empowers and gives hope to humanity. The cross, the symbol of inhumanity, brutality and death, has been transformed by a suffering God into a symbol of love over hate, and life over death.³⁶

The acknowledgment of God's presence and love gives dan chung power and hope. Kho and han will be erased from their hearts when they are willing to let God's love transcend them. Jesus taught people to love their enemy and pray for those who persecute them. I believe that when people experience God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, they will be transformed by his love, and then the kho and han can be erased, the wounded heart can be healed.

³⁶ Lloyd K. Wake, "Salvation, Struggle, and Survival," Discover the Truth and Recover the Community, ed. Stephen S. Kim, Proceedings of the Roundtable of Ethnic Theologians, sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church, Charles Cook Theological School and Conference Center, Tempe, Ariz., 8-11 Nov. 1990, 38-39.

CHAPTER 5

Practical Recommendations for Ministry

Mandated by the Christian Understanding of God

Formation of A Loving and Caring Community

Christian community from the beginning has been the mark of the true church of Jesus Christ. Two characteristics of the church after Pentecost were a strong unity expressed in the practices of fellowship and the sharing of material things.¹ The church became a sacrificial, caring fellowship.

The offering of a loving and caring community in a mass society is part of the contribution the Christian faith has to offer in the world today. To create a loving and supportive community is a part of the strategy of mission.

Alienation and loneliness are the pervasive feelings of refugees in a strange land. These are far more serious in people's lives than we recognize. All manner of human predicaments are compounded by alienation and loneliness. Many characteristics of modern American society increase the peoples's isolation and alienation. The smaller units of

¹ Acts 2:42-47.

society are disappearing. Machines and computers tend to depersonalize people. There are also deeper levels of depersonalization in American society like racism, discrimination. All of this creates a terrifying shock for the new refugees who come from another culture which is highly family-oriented. In confronting this kind of lonely impersonal society, the Christian church has the opportunity to offer fellowship to those who feel alienated and lonely in a foreign country. The church becomes a community of caring people, and also a community dedicated to mutual caring and ordering its life to that end.

Chi-Ping Yu developed a Theology of Filial Piety in which he identified the church as the filial community and being filial is the important mark and mission of the church.² This interpretation is important because it suits the Vietnamese culture which highly honors the family. Respectful love and service to the parents, and caring love between sisters and brothers in the family are the apparent characteristics of the Vietnamese family. Likewise, the church is a filial community.

Since the family of God consists of brothers and sisters who call God their Abba, and since Jesus is the elder son in the family, and the Spirit of filial love dwells among them, this family is made of God's dear children. Within this community there is no discrimination of races, sexes, ages, classes, economic, educational, and cultural backgrounds.

² Chi-Ping Yu, "The Theology of Filial Piety: An Initial Formation," Asia Journal of Theology 3 (Oct. 1989): 496-508.

Through faith and baptism we are admitted into the household of God, and become one with the Father, with Christ, and with brothers and sisters in the family. (Gal.3:26,27) Moreover, since the will of the heavenly Father is to have his children conform to the "image of his Son, in order that he might be the first born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), and since Jesus is his Father's filial Son, the household of God should naturally be the "filial community. Thus, being filial becomes the important mark and mission of the church on earth.³

In this view, the church of Vietnamese refugees should be a filial community, because it is suited to Vietnamese culture and is beneficial for mission.

Confucianism stresses not only the praxis and pedagogy of filial piety, but also the promulgation of human-relatedness. In the same manner, when we see the church as the filial community, we do not see ourselves as a closed and self-serving community. Rather, we see ourselves as an open and self-giving community, whose members are willing to leave their homeland and go to the most remote corner of the world to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, the grace and love of God, and to invite people, with humility and sincerity, to join the family of God.⁴

In Vietnamese culture, family is the place through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect, and fidelity. Family members share responsibility for caring each other in order that all every member may be assisted toward complete personhood. The church as a filial community provides the potential for nurturing human beings into the fullness of their humanity. It binds members together to preserve and protect what they

³ Ibid., 504.

⁴ Ibid., 504.

value and to achieve the purposes which they envision for themselves as a community.

In practice, first, the Vietnamese church can create community fellowship and seek to serve the Vietnamese people by offering the places and activities of interest with a view to nurturing interpersonal relationships.

Secondly, the church can offer a deeper richness of fellowship to those who have a common faith in Jesus Christ. Its focus should be on nurturing and growth for all who are committed to Jesus Christ.

The church needs to create centers and organizations as stepping stones or bridges over which those Vietnamese living beyond the church may move to accept its fellowship. Such activities include classes in English as Second Language, Vietnamese language and culture classes, Vietnamese Youth fellowship, and Fellowship for Vietnamese seniors. We can draw together many who have lived in isolation and have their lives intertwine in common interests and activities. It is hoped that as many move into the life of the church, they will also move forward to deeper fellowship in the church through conversion.

It is important to build a relational support system to create in the newcomers a sense of being known and belonging to the church. One strategy is a sponsors' program through which a newcomer's family is assigned a sponsor who is willing to guide, visit and provide them with transportation

for the first months of their life in the community fellowship.

Another basic strategy for relational support is our church's small prayer and nurture groups. The fellowship of prayer and nurture is the deeper fellowship of the church which can be discovered only by those who have come to know God in Jesus Christ. Because this is vital for spiritual growth, every new believer ought to become quickly involved in the life of some group connected with our church, such as a Sunday school class, a youth fellowship, a prayer group, or an age group.

With the increasing numbers of newly-arriving refugees and immigrants, one of the greatest tasks of the Vietnamese church is providing opportunities for new Christians to meet for fellowship and growth. We must provide facilities for personal growth, both in spiritual experience and in the understanding of the wholeness of life. We need to provide programs for Christian education to nurture new members. Spiritual-growth groups must be a part of the total program of the fellowship. Through Bible study, through testimony and sharing, through prayer and through caring for each other, lives are drawn together and people discover further the meaning of life, the mystery and wonder of God and his purposes for the world.

Communion with God and the wholeness of human community are closely related. The struggle for wholeness of human

beings and of the community is the ministry of the church. Our social and political commitment derives from our faith in a God of justice and aim at bringing about wholeness in the community.

Hospitality Evangelism

The church is a caring community that tells the story of God's love and care in illuminating events, and the most important event is the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "The telling of this story is also the greatest expression of caring."⁵

For centuries salvation in Christian terms has contained two elements: the saving of souls by taking them out of the body and out of society, and the saving of people not so much to live a fuller life now, but to find fulfillment beyond the grave. An evangelism which is purely individualistic in its purpose and effect is irrelevant in the world today, and has little chance of reaching the masses with the good news of Jesus Christ.

True evangelism is offering the good news to all who may benefit from it. It is not directed primarily toward the recruitment of members for the community, although the community rightly rejoices when some who hear the story decide to join with the community whose identity is constituted by the story. The community knows that the story's saving meaning is never understood all at once, but only bit by bit in changing circumstances, and that apart from a community sharing this story in the context of mutual concern and caring,

⁵ Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr., Christian Identity and Theological Education (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 54.

the story's power can have only limited realization.⁶

Salvation must be the receiving of God's saving grace for the whole person and creation. Gustavo Gutierrez gives us a new perspective of salvation when he writes:

Salvation... is something which embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ: Thus the center of God's salvific design is Jesus Christ, who by His death and resurrection transforms the universe and makes it possible for man to reach fulfillment as a human being. This fulfillment embraces every aspect of humanity; body, and spirit, individual and society, person and cosmos, time and eternity.⁷

Jesus must at one and the same time be presented as a personal savior and a social liberator. The world cries out for a power which can give freedom to persons and society possessed by evil. Christ has proved his power to defeat corporate evil and to set people free from their bondage.

God in the Scripture is the One who set people free. Right in the beginning of the Biblical stories we find the release of the slaves from Egypt. God said through Moses, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt,... and I have come down to deliver them"⁸

George G. Hunter III defines evangelism as what Jesus Christ does through the church's kerygma, koinonia, and

⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁷ Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation 85.

⁸ Exod. 3:7-8

diakonia to set people free.⁹ The proclamation or sharing of the Christian message (kerygma) is basic to evangelism. Jesus was born in a stable and to a poverty-stricken home in Palestine. As he grew to be the prophet, he identified his ministry "to preach the good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives."¹⁰ The mission of the church, therefore, to find and disciple lost people is originally and primarily Christ's mission. God uses our proclamation to receptive people to awaken a faith-response to His grace. Through Christians' friendship and witness, faith begins to awaken in a person by the Spirit's work in them. As soon as one receives him as Lord, he frees them from their sins, from their fears and from all bondage, and brings them to faith, peace, hope, love justice and self-fulfillment in him.

The second resource of evangelism, as Hunter states, is fellowship (Koinonia). "It is from Kerygma that the Christian faith is taught, it is within Koinonia that the Christian faith is caught."¹¹ It is evident that the early church attracted as many people to the faith through the inclusiveness, support, and power of its fellowship as it did through its proclamation of the gospel.

⁹ George G. Hunter III, The Contagious Congregation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 28.

¹⁰ Luke 4:18.

¹¹ Hunter, 29.

In the context of immigrants and refugees, Vietnamese ministry needs to focus on this resource of the gospel to create a believing and loving fellowship in order to hold on the believers and attract newcomers. Hospitality is the most important element to attract the Vietnamese.

Hospitality is a Christian virtue. Unfortunately, with society growing in fear and anxiety, we are often afraid of receiving strangers into our homes, into our churches.

There is a growing number of people who are homeless, strangers in the Vietnamese community. They need someone who cares and accepts them.

When a congregation becomes a genuinely hospitable people, those outside the fold are attracted. Hospitality is the central mark of the people of God, and hospitality is enjoined as a virtue throughout the Old and New Testaments. Hospitality can be expressed in a thousand ways, but it features helping people feel "at home" in the congregation.¹²

It is important to understand that "hospitality evangelism" is only a beginning. Vietnamese ministry should be extended to the whole person as discussed previously.

Worship and Preaching

As a filial community, the Vietnamese church is a worshipping community where the Heavenly Father is worshipped and people are inspired and informed to move out from worship to witness in the world.

In the Vietnamese context, worship must include the

¹² James N. Poling, Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 108.

nurture of Christians, but the evangelical purpose must also be included for those who have not yet received the gospel of Jesus for themselves.

In the early church there were two forms of worship. One form represented the gathering of Christians for nurture and their strengthening through the breaking of bread from house to house. The second form of worship was designed primarily for those who had not yet come to know the gospel and had not accepted it. The Vietnamese churches need to recover the insight of the early Christians. Around the Vietnamese fellowship is a mission field of Vietnamese community. There is a tremendous need for worship to be designed in part for those who have not yet found the Christian faith and commitment.

It is necessary to create a cultural atmosphere in which artistic forms like traditional music and Vietnamese folk melodies can be used to praise God in the worship.

In the worshipping context, preaching is utterly central to the purpose envisioned by the church. In How Shall They Hear? Samuel D. Proctor presents a theology of preaching for our generation based on four theses.

First, God is still present and active in human affairs and intervenes in our behalf.¹³ This conviction is important for the Vietnamese because it keeps alive in them

¹³ Samuel D. Proctor, "How Shall They Hear?": Effective Preaching for Vital Faith (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1992), 10.

the only resource of spiritual strength that can restore their kho and han, and foster a faith that calls their response to others in the filial community. Preaching for the Vietnamese must bring God very near so that they feel God's presence with peace and confidence of the divine guidance, giving direction, purpose, and fulfillment to life.

Second, spiritual renewal and moral wholeness are available to us all.¹⁴ The preacher should preach with confidence that "The possibilities within us for goodness and greatness are a basis for believing that human nature was not meant to be a total investment in evil. We are equipped to heal diseases, to educate the illiterate, to counsel the wayward, to feed the hungry, to build real community, to protect the environment,... to provide for the weak and the powerless."¹⁵

Third, genuine community is a realizable goal for the future human family.¹⁶ In the Vietnamese-American context, the Vietnamese need to hear a message that gives them hope for a genuine community which is wider and more inclusive in America. This hope and the possibility of genuine community rest firmly upon our Christian understanding of equality of all persons before God. This understanding opens our hearts

¹⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 44.

¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

for unselfish love which flows from our view of others as objects of God's unconditional love, as we are also. God's agape is for all of us.

When we preach about the possibility of community, it is important for us to save our people from the illusion that the distinctions created by poverty and by historic exclusion mean more than they do. Beneath such distinctions persons are equal. When we acknowledge this equality, we authenticate other persons who have been so victimized.¹⁷

Community will not happen on its own. It calls for urging and promoting. Hearers should be convinced that God came in Christ to save the whole world, to redeem the entire human race, and to affirm the hope that the human family can indeed achieve a genuine community.

Last but not least, Immortality is an ever-present potential in our midst.¹⁸ The preacher needs to preach with conviction that our earthbound existence is given meaning and purpose by the dimension of eternity. Jesus preached the Good News that the kingdom of God was in our midst. It is constant, present and potential eternity. We are called to repent, to believe and to take up our kingdom membership while still struggling in the world of space and time. This is very important because it is indeed good news.

When the preacher proclaims the ever-present potential of God's kingdom and the flow of eternity through our existence, the people get the message that the way this

¹⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

temporal dimension has shaped our lives is not the final word. We are indeed a colony of heaven, and we have other connections.¹⁹

Preaching means the proclamation of God's good news to mankind. Throughout his life Jesus gave himself to communicating the gospel by proclamation. At the end he gave his great commission to go into the world and preach the gospel. Preaching obviously was the chosen method of Jesus' ministry. The apostles preached the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead for our salvation. We also preach the good news preached by the early apostles. We preach the same message but within a different context.

Preachers must take the biblical stories from their ancient contexts and retell them in the contemporary context of the refugees. James A. Sanders explores the importance of three basic elements of proclamation: text, context, and hermeneutics. He writes:

Biblical preaching in context means re-presenting today the message of a biblical passage for the contemporary context, scoring as closely for the modern hearer the point or point scored originally by the biblical authors and thinkers in their time.²⁰

A careful discernment of sociological context and the needs of the people addressed is essential. It is the role of the preacher to bring the biblical story to life in the present

¹⁹ Ibid., 67.

²⁰ James A. Sanders, God Has a Story Too (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 5.

situation of the hearers. Vietnamese refugees can have faith in God and find hope in God's Word if the biblical story is brought to life in the context of their own story.

The interrelationship of the text and historical context down to our own historical context is the nexus of God's Word. The same language in two different contexts may mean different things. The Word of God happens or takes place at the nexus of text and context. The very human words our ancestors in the faith have left us may become the Word of God over and over again as our situations and contexts change, and as the Holy Spirit wills.²¹

Preaching in the Vietnamese congregations in the United States is preaching to the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants. The preacher thus needs to speak out of his deep convictions based on refugee and immigrant experience. As a refugee minister, preaching for me is more than expounding the Scriptures, more than telling the story of Jesus, more than sharing insights and knowledge of Christian faith. Preaching to me is the giving of myself to the people whom I serve. It includes my actual life, the roots of my existence and my struggle as a refugee as well. The great gifts that God has given me are the experience of pain, loneliness, sorrow, joy and struggle. In these experiences Christ has been my only reliable companion. By sharing myself, I transmit Christ to my people. In preaching to my people I seek to win them for Christ.

²¹ James A. Sanders, Canon and Community (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 78.

In preaching I want to challenge and enlarge the world of listeners. I want to persuade people to remain open for God's way to make them whole, and for the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Pastoral Counseling

Counseling of Vietnam refugees and immigrants is mostly related to their unjust and painful experience in the past, or to problems of depression in their struggle for survival in the U. S.

In The Minister and the Care of the Soul, Daniel Day Williams develops three generalizations about the presence of God in pastoral counseling. These can help a person in crisis discover God's will in his situation.

First, the person in crisis can move from the immediate question of pain and frustration to the ultimate meaning of his existence. And the question of the meaning of one's experience leads surely to the question of the meaning of all existence. In doing this he gains potential for growth into new awareness.

From a Christian point of view, then, human needs must be met on two levels. There are the obvious insistent needs of the body and mind for that which sustains and nourishes. But the immediate problem may be the door through which we walk into the arena where ultimate questions are asked and answered. The search for therapy is transmuted into the quest for salvation.²²

Second, he suggests that the deeper reality of life is

²² Williams, 28-29.

present in the counseling relationship. God is involved in every human encounter. It is through God that the relationship occurs and that healing is possible.

Human relationships are never dyadic, but always triadic. There is a reality which stands between the persons, and that reality, to keep our term neutral for the moment, is the meaning of existence as it really is... what has taken place has been a transaction not only between herself and the counseling, but with a reality which is neither of them, not the two together, but that which holds, measures, and justifies them in one world of meaning.²³

Third, Williams says that for the Christian the presence of God is in the counseling relationship and God's operative power gives healing and strength.

We have offered a Christological interpretation of personal relationships. When a broken self finds healing and strength, the healing power belongs neither to the self nor to another who acts as psychiatrist or pastor. It belongs to a power operative in their relationship. That power is God, who as we know him in the Christian faith, is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the Third Man, who discloses the truth about our humanity in its needs and in its hope.²⁴

The truth revealed by God in Jesus Christ is that the foundation of all reality is love. Thus the pastor can move ahead in the counseling relationship in the faith that the power which will support them is the power of love.

In brief, Williams develops three generalizations about the counseling relationship: that the immediate problem may be the occasion for growth at the level of ultimate values;

²³ Ibid., 66.

²⁴ Ibid., 77.

that there is a power in the counseling relationship which holds the pastor and the counselee together; and that this power is God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

This understanding of the counseling relationship is crucially important for the pastor. I think pastoral counseling is different than psychotherapy in that pastors deal with the problems of contemporary living by applying religious insight to them. In counseling, the pastor is the person who provides people with new ways of understanding themselves, God, and others in relation to whatever problem they may be experiencing, so that they can still find meaning in life and remain open to life. When people can no longer see the meaning of their existence, they lose perspective and become self-destructive: "where there is no vision people perish."²⁵

With that understanding of pastoral care, I view the pastor as serving the counselee in the function of midwife. As a spiritual midwife the pastor can help people have a religious understanding of their pain or their failure or wounds as a collective, related pain. In the Christian belief human wounds are intimately connected with the all-embracing God. By lifting our painful memories out of the individualistic sphere, by connecting our sufferings with the story of God's suffering in Jesus Christ or with the fact that God is affected with the pain of all humanity, our

²⁵ Prov. 29:18.

pains can be healed and transformed.

Harold S. Kushner in When Bad Things Happen to Good People explains his understanding of a God who suffers with us through his own suffering as follows:

I don't know what it means for God to suffer.... But I would like to think that the anguish I feel when I read of the suffering of innocent people reflects God's anguish and God's compassion, even if His way of feeling pain is different from ours. I would like to think that He is the source of my being able to feel sympathy and outrage, and that He and I are on the same side when we stand with the victim against those who would hurt him.²⁶

So we can draw upon God for the strength and courage we need to survive life's tragedies. Because the evil, the bad thing, is not God's will, we need not feel hurt or abandoned by God when tragedy strikes. We can turn to God for help in overcoming it because we realize that God is as outraged by it as we are.

In The Wounded Healer, Henri J. M. Nouwen says that the task of a minister in dealing with the suffering of people is not that of a doctor-- to take away people's pain. Rather, he deepens their pain to a level where it can be shared, understood and felt.²⁷ When people become aware that they do not have to escape their pains, but that they can mobilize them into a common search for life, those tremendous pains are transformed from expressions of despair

²⁶ Harold S. Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People (New York: Avon, 1981), 85.

²⁷ Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Wounded Healer (New York: Doublday, Image Books, 1979), 92.

into signs of hope.²⁸ From that respect, Christian community is a healing community because it is where the wounds and pains of people become openings or occasions for transformation.

Psychologically, the caring pastor encourages his people in the concrete circumstances of everyday life with confrontation and inspiration. Confrontation challenges people to accept the past, the reality of things. This is what it means in a well-known prayer, "Oh God, grant us the serenity of mind to accept that which cannot be changed, the courage to change that which can be changed, and the wisdom to tell one from the other." When people accept as an inescapable fact that they can never go back and make up for what has happened in the past, they are freed to live their life from the present onward. By making peace with the past and accepting what cannot be changed they can be transformed; they can open themselves to new possibilities in solving their problems. Thus the goal in pastoral counseling is the liberated and liberating spirit; opening one's being for the experience of the truth that makes us free²⁹: free to forgive, free to love, free to grow, free to become all that God wills us to become. Inspiration stirs people to look forward again with new courage and confidence. As a coach instructs his athletes whose zeal

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ John 8: 312.

outruns their skill, the pastor guides the counselee with ideas and vision, with new understanding of the tactics and rules of life, in order that they may start again by looking at their potential and at the aim of life. The pastor calls to the minds of men and women the vision of the future, and the hope that they can attain their goal by sharpening their vision and empowering their potential. In this regard, pastoral care involves a variety of growth-stimulating methods to help people use more of their potentialities by developing better communication with self, others, nature and God. Thus pastoral ministry sustains hope by focusing on the present strengths of the counselee, and on his ability to create a better future for himself. To accomplish this the pastor helps the counselee cope creatively with his problems and conflicts by using pain, problems and crises as growth opportunities.

This approach seeks to liberate people's potential so that they can make creative and responsible decisions. The caring pastor as midwife looks at people in terms of their becoming. This is what we see in Jesus' ministry. He could see in Simon, a fisherman with apparent weakness, an underlying potential for rocklike strength. By looking at people in terms of their becoming, pastors can help enable troubled people to become, to change and to grow.

In brief, the immediate goal of the caring pastor in my context of ministry to the Vietnamese refugees and

immigrants who have tremendous grief in their past is to help them be aware of the things which cannot be changed, so that they can accept these, and even find value in those aspects of themselves which they find most intolerable. The next phase is to encourage new possibilities through support, challenge and persuasion. People with problems need the conviction that they can control or influence their life events, and the role of the pastor is to help them be aware of their potential and of the things which can be changed. By making peace with the past and accepting what cannot be changed, they can be transformed or opened to a new possibility to solve their problems.

A Serving Community

In the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the promise and first fruits of redemption have been brought to our sinful and selfish humanity. To day we are called to patterns of an authentic community that take seriously our roots in biblical faith as well as to be sensitive to what God is doing in our own time. We are acknowledge that we are part of God's creation. We are called into an authentic community empowered by the model of Jesus Christ who identified his ministry as a serving one.

Christian community therefore must go beyond word to act. Marvin M. Conn in "The Mission of the Church" emphasizes that Christian faith runs the risk of losing its relevance without the concrete situation or hermeneutical

context.

Liberation theology calls us to practice what we preach, to be "letters... known and read by all men" (II Cor. 3:2), to "prove what the will of God is" by the "living and holy sacrifice" of our lives lived out before God (Rom. 12:1-2). Evangelical theological method must include a hermeneutic of action, an interaction of living by the Word of the Lord in the world of the Lord.... Diakonia is destroyed when it is not contextualized in clothing for the naked, visits the sick, food for the hungry (Matt. 25:31-46), cups of cold water in the name of Jesus. Kerygma is destroyed when it is confession of "Lord, Lord," by those who practice lawlessness (Matt. 7:21-22).³⁰

The call to serve as part of mission arises directly from the teaching and example of Jesus. He was sensitive and responsive to every form of human need. Jesus' concern for human need in his ministry is a model for the church's concern. The purpose of the serving ministry is to meet human need. It is not carried in order to make people Christian, or to maneuver them toward conversion. The fact remains, however, that a caring ministry does predispose people to hear the gospel. When Christians show no concern for human suffering, people are less ready to listen to the message spoken.

Abraham Maslow fashioned the hierarchy of human motives which provides great help for people who use motivational appeals in evangelism. Maslow's hierarchy of human needs can be listed in the following levels:

³⁰ Marvin M. Conn, "The Mission of the Church," Evangelicals and Liberation, ed. Carl E. Amerding (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1977), 74-75.

Aesthetic needs
 Need for self-actualization
 (self-fulfillment, deep satisfaction)
 Self-esteem needs (respect, achievement)
 Social needs (love, affection, belonging)
 Safety needs (security, stability, insurance)
 Physiological needs (food, clothing, shelter, car)

All of these needs are intrinsic to human personality. The need that is in the forefront of consciousness and currently motivating a person is the lowest need that is unfulfilled.³¹ All Vietnamese refugees and immigrants are deeply worried about their immediate needs: employment, food and shelter for the family, having a car, health insurance. They spend most of their time in efforts to fill these needs. When they go to church, they expect the pastor to give them immediate help with these needs. They expect the church do something tangible for them. They ignore their other emotional or spiritual needs that are present in the background of their personality. The point of contact between the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants and the gospel is their needs, hopes, longings, and deepest motives. I believe that the hierarchy of human motives as fashioned by Abraham Maslow provides great help in setting priorities for service to the newly arriving refugees and immigrants.

Physical needs, economic needs, emotional needs, social needs, and educational needs all are important, and ideally the church is sensitive to all of them. Because other

³¹ Abraham A. Maslow, Motivation and Personality, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 40.

institutions play an important role than the church in dealing with these needs, and because of the limited resources of the church in response to all of these needs, John Cobb stresses attention to "the needs which other institutions expect the church to offer the primary ministry: the need to worship, to meditate, and to pray: the need for meaning in life's major transitions and crises; and the need for guidance in determining convictions, commitments, and vision."³²

It is also essential to realize that if we are really concerned about meeting the people's needs, we cannot overlook the social context of the needy. Meeting the immediate need of the refugees is just the beginning. The church should participate in creating a just society where all refugees and immigrants are given opportunities to be trained, nurtured and offered positions with dignity. Liberating people from the structure and forces that fetter human beings is the deep-seated need of the needy.

Sponsorship Ministry

According to the agreement between the United States and Vietnamese governments, all former political prisoners who were detained more than three years are now allowed to come to the United States to begin new lives. All Vietnamese refugees admitted to the United States need a sponsor who agrees to provide the basic necessities for the

³² Hough and Cobb, 52.

first 90 days of the refugees' new life in the U. S. The majority of Amerasians and former political prisoners leaving Vietnam are "free cases"; that is, they do not have relatives or friends in the United States. Vietnamese churches can offer sponsorship ministry to provide sponsorship and serve as "back up" for these refugees. This is an opportunity for an exciting direct ministry to the refugees. It is a moral commitment to help them begin a new life. When the local church or an individual provides sponsorship for a refugee family, they are responsible for the following:

- Meeting the family at the local airport upon arrival.
- Arranging for temporary housing on short notice.
- Helping to provide food, clothing, housewares.
- Assisting them in applying for Social Security Card, enrolling them in English classes or tutoring, registering children in school.
- Providing transportation to and from work, school, church, the grocery store, etc., until they have learned to use public transportation or have acquired their own means of transportation.
- Helping the family become oriented and acquainted with the community and society.
- Helping them get a health exam within 30 days.
- Helping them prepare themselves for work and to find initial employment.

-Helping them apply for food stamps and welfare at a Social Service Agency. (Refugees are eligible for food stamps upon arrival and for welfare after one month.)

-Providing emergency and back-up services when needed.

-Visiting them regularly during the first three months.

All of the above responsibilities consume time and energy, but this is a unique ministry opportunity for the church to engage God's mission and demonstrate God's love to the refugees in a profound way.

Teaching English as a Second Language

Most refugees and immigrants are impeded by language barriers. Communicating in and understanding English are their common problems. Because they neither understand nor speak English they almost feel like they are deaf and dumb. It is essential that the church look for ways to help them learn English so that they can seek gainful employment. Because the majority of newcomers do not speak English, they have to settle for low-paying jobs or depend on welfare. When immigrants and refugees succeed in obtaining better positions, they can get off welfare and have health insurance.

Churches need to recruit volunteers to teach the refugees English on a one-to-one basis, or in groups. The goal of the English program is to help them speak, read and write English in the shortest time possible. However, learning a new language cannot be accomplished overnight.

Refugees and immigrants need to be encouraged to take opportunity to learn and practice English. Although Vietnamese recognize the need to learn English in order to improve their living conditions, they naturally prefer speaking Vietnamese at home. It is evident that parents can learn English from their children. They can improve their English if they make efforts to communicate at home in the same language their children use at school.

Employment

The reaction of the American public to the admittance of the Vietnamese refugees was frequently negative; opinion was unfavorable. It was argued that the resettlement of such groups of refugees as Amerasians or ex-prisoners en masse would strain the employment markets. In order to avoid an economic threat, the U. S. government planned to disperse the refugees among different states throughout the country. The problem is that most refugees face major difficulties in finding jobs regardless of where they are located because of the language barrier. They also lack the experience and knowledge necessary to work in a society of modern technology.

Nonetheless, churches can get involved in employment programs by having their own members participate in finding jobs for the refugees. We can refer them to government agencies to help them with vocational training, advertising and employment. It is urgent that the church offer such

job-finding or job-creating ministry to help refugees have jobs, especially for those who are no longer eligible for government subsidies.

Housing

The need for adequate housing at affordable costs is critical for all Vietnamese refugee and immigrant families. Most refugee families are paying more than 85 percent of their incomes for housing. One the problems for individuals or for the church offering sponsorship to refugees is to find suitable shelter for them when they arrive. All of the refugees are not qualified to rent an apartment or a house. Rental policy requires them to have a co-signer. To help the housing need of refugee families the church can look for suitable apartments to rent for them. Members in the church can help to provide basic furniture and housewares for them. It is helpful if the sponsor can rent an apartment for the refugees near his own house, or the church can reserve an apartment complex where many refugee families can live in the same area for mutual support. In my experience helping the Vietnamese refugees in my church, I see such a supportive community as absolutely necessary. The strength of such a community lies in its ability to share and help one another in common interests.

It is evident in my ministry that when Vietnamese refugees and immigrants come to church, they expect the pastor to give them immediate help with their needs. When a

person needs help, the pastor or volunteers should respond to the best of their ability with the available resources. In some cases, I have referred persons to other institutions or agencies that were in a position to provide the specialized help needed.

Charles F. Kemp in Pastoral Care with the Poor advises that the person who is helping the poor should be prepared to change the counseling techniques he has been using, and give more advice and ideas to solve the problem because they "expect immediate results."³³ It is important that, if the pastor cannot actually help a Vietnamese refugee or immigrant in practical terms, he stay with that person, sustaining him with material, emotional and spiritual support.

Most of the recommendations above are offered to meet immediate needs of the newcomers. I appreciate Stephen S. Kim's development of "A Humane Theology of Community" in which he affirms that an authentic ministry of an immigrant church should be prophetic and visionary.³⁴ "The prophetic role bases itself in the present, proclaiming judgments and promises, and reaching out on the future, the visionary role fixes its eyes to the future and invites the present to

³³ Charles K. Kemp, Pastoral Care with the Poor (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 69.

³⁴ Kim,

dream and get to work."³⁵ From this respect, together with our effort to help newly-arriving refugees and immigrants access American society, the Vietnamese church should carry out its ministry through "self-critical" and "self-nurturing" activities for the people to grow toward the wholeness of their humanity, complete personhood. The visionary role of the Vietnamese ministry is working together with other immigrant Christians to build "an authentic community" free from all kinds of domination which includes social, economical, political, ethical and spiritual oppression. The United States of American has been built by Western immigrants who come before us, but it does not an ideal society that fits us or meets our needs. Immigrant churches need to have a larger vision to build up this adopted land to a just community which includes all people in spite of their historical, cultural and racial backgrounds.

In brief, it is critically important that the Vietnamese churches in the American context proclaim the liberating grace of God to their people through both word and action. Sermons, Bible study, and worship services are effective and important channels for communicating God's message of hope, but the ministry cannot end there; people who live on the fringes of society will be receptive to the message only if and when it is substantiated by action.

³⁵ Ibid., 48.

Sometimes the most effective way of witnessing for Christ is through action. The needs of the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants are vast and the church cannot hope to meet all of them, but we can offer the spiritual guidance to help them maintain a sense of hope and dignity amidst their difficulties. Within the context of the poverty and discrimination which many Vietnamese refugees and immigrants encounter daily, the church needs to apply the Gospel to the realities of American society and promoting social reforms to achieve the justice and equality God desires for all God's children.

CHAPTER 6

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

Although the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the consequences of that war still linger on. Thousands of Vietnamese former political prisoners and Amerasians have immigrated to the United States. This project addresses the problems of adjustment and resettlement of these special groups of the newly arriving Vietnamese, and the role of the church in providing a practical ministry for them.

In my proposal for the practical applications for ministry, I have combined my theological, psychological and sociological understanding of the problem with my personal experience as a refugee as well as my experience in this ministry.

Chapter 1 is the introduction of the project.

Chapter 2 deals with the understanding of the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants by recognizing their historical and cultural background, their difficulties and problems in cultural adjustments, and the immediate issues that hinder their resettlement.

Chapter 3 presents my theological perspective for ministry which integrates my own story as a refugee and my call to minister to the refugees.

Chapter 4 formulates a theology of dan chung in the discussions of Troi, kho and han: the root problems of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants and the resolution of kho and han from dan chung's perspective.

Chapter 5 proposes the practical recommendations for the ministry to Vietnamese refugees and immigrants as a response to needy individuals in transitional crisis.

Conclusion

After the Vietnam War there were in excess of one million Vietnamese that left Vietnam and now are living in more than fifty countries around the world. They fled their country in the hope of breaking with the past; in the hope of a better life, release from captivity, suffering and oppression. The Vietnamese migrated to escape a social structure which was oppressive and hopeless, with a view of achieving their dream of living in prosperity, freedom and justice. Here they hoped to live more fully human. However, the reality of life in the country they came to often discourages them. Many cannot feel at home living in a country that is truly foreign to them.

All of the issues addressed in this project portray the mentality of the new Vietnamese immigrants and refugees and their struggles in the spiritual, emotional, mental, social,

and financial areas of life in the United States.

For the time being, the church in a Vietnamese community assumes a more complex role than it does in a more stable and established one. It is communion with one another that people desire; a deep sense mutual of belonging. People come to church not only for religious reasons. They come because they long for relationship, and they want to meet and be associated with people of their own race. They have a deep need to belong. Sometimes they come for social reasons. They know they can count on the church, and they believe that the church will try to help them out of their problems.

For many Vietnamese people the church is a place for the needy, for those with problems. America is a land of freedom and prosperity that provides Vietnamese with opportunities for a better future. However, life in the United States is filled with anxiety and pressure. When Vietnamese immigrants and refugees come to this country, they are overwhelmed by all that they cannot do. They realize their limitations and have a profound need for a loving and caring community.

The Vietnamese Christian church in the present context can become a big family of close friends, the communion that people desire with one another. Belonging is one of the deepest needs of human beings. If the church can provide a place where the needy strangers can feel at home -- gain a

sense of belonging -- then church becomes a place of satisfaction and fulfillment.

In the Judaic tradition and during the Exile, the synagogue was considered the religious, educational, and social center for the people of Israel who sojourned in a foreign land. The synagogue helped them preserve their traditional values from generation to generation. In the same way, the Vietnamese churches should remain multipurpose centers for new and old settlers alike. Besides providing religious and spiritual functions, the church has a significant role as the learning center for new immigrants and refugees. The Vietnamese churches in the contemporary American context need to maintain an efficacious balance between their nature as a community of faith and the fellowship of God's redemptive love, and their involvement in social concerns and services.

Bibliography

Books

- Baldwin, Beth C. Capturing the Change. Santa Ana, Calif.: Immigrant and Refugee Planning Center, 1982.
- Birch, Bruce C. Singing the Lord's Song: A Study of Isaiah 40-45. [New York]: United Methodist Church, General Board of Global Ministries, 1981.
- Burton, Eve. "The Women's Center." To Bear Any Burden. Ed. Al Santoli. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.
- Buttinger, Joseph. The Smaller Dragon. New York: Frederick Preager, 1958.
- Cartmail, Keith S. Exodus Indochina. Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984.
- Conn, Marvin M. "The Mission of the Church." Evangelicals and Liberation. Ed. Carl E. Armerding. Nutley N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1977.
- Dao, Anh Duy. Viet Nam Van Hoa Su Cuong. [The cultural history of Vietnam]. Saigon: Dai Nam, 1965.
- Fisher, Neal F. Context for Discovery. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. A Theology of Liberation. Trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973.
- . We Drink From Our Own Wells. Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984.
- Ho, Man Keung. Family Therapy With Ethnic Minorities. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1987.
- Hoang, Mien Trong. Viet Nam Van Hoc Toan Thu. [A complete anthology of the Vietnamese literature]. Vol. 2. Saigon: Quoc Hoa, 1986.

- Hough, Joseph C., Jr., and John B. Cobb, Jr. Christian Identity and Theological Education. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985.
- Hunter, George G., III. The Contagious Congregation. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.
- Kemp, Charles K. Pastoral Care with the Poor. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972.
- Kitamori, Kazo. Theology of the Pain of God. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1965.
- Kushner, Harold S. When Bad Things Happen to Good People. New York: Avon Books, 1981.
- Lee, Jung Young. Sermons to the Twelve. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Ly, Trung Chanh. Tim Ve Dan Toc. [Going back to our roots]. Saigon: Lua Thieng, 1972.
- Maslow, Abraham A. Motivation and Personality. 2nd ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- Nguyen, Du. Truyen Thuy Kieu. [The story of Thuy-Kieu]. Saigon: Dai Nam, 1968.
- Nguyen, Ngoc Van. Tuc Ngu Phong Dao. [Folk sayings and proverbs]. Glendale, Calif.: Dai Nam, 1989.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. The Wounded Healer. New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1979.
- Phan, Binh Ke. Viet Nam Phong Tuc. [Vietnamese customs]. Los Alamitos, Calif.: Xuan Thu, 1990.
- Poling, James N. Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985.
- Proctor, Samuel D. "How Shall They Hear?": Effective Preaching for Vital Faith. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1992.
- Sanders, James A. Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- . God Has a Story Too. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- Santoli, Al, ed. To Bear Any Burden. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

Song, C. S. Tell Us Our Names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984.

Toan, Anh. Nep Cu. [Old patterns]. Saigon: Dai Nam, 1968.

---. Phong Tuc Viet Nam. [The customs of the Vietnamese]. Saigon: Cuu Long Giang, 1969.

---. Tin Nguong Viet Nam. [Religions in Vietnam]. Vol. 2 Lancaster, Pa.: Xuan Thu, 1985.

Tran, Trong Kim. Viet Nam Su Luoc. [The history of Vietnam in brief]. Saigon: Tan Viet, 1964.

Williams, Daniel Day. The Minster and the Care of Souls. New York: Harper, 1961.

Periodicals

Bouvier, Leon F. "The Fastest Growing Minority." American Demographics, May 1985: 15-33.

Brody, Jeffrey. "Few Amerasians Are Settling In." Orange County Register, 14 Mar. 1991: A1, 11.

Do, Anh. "Prisoners: New Vietnamese Immigrants Escaped Political Tyranny, But Not War's Stigma." Orange County Register, 4 Oct. 1992: A20.

Felsman, Kirk C., and Mark C. Johnson. "For Amerasians, a Welcome Mat Is Not Enough." Los Angeles Times, 23 Jan. 1989: A5.

Fisher, Gail. "Amerasians: Looking for GI Dads." Los Angeles Times, 30 June 1991: A28-29.

Klein, Dianne. "Vietnam's Castoffs Come Home." Los Angeles Times, 30 June 1991: A28.

Ranard, Donald A., and Douglas F. Gilzou. "The Amerasians." In America: Perspectives on Refugee Resettlement, June 1989: 4-19.

Robey, Bryant. "America's Asian." American Demographics, May 1985: 26.

Rogers, John. "Vietnamese Villagers Mourn My Lai Tragedy." Orange County Register, 17 Mar. 1993: A13.

Yu, Chi-Ping. "The Theology of Filial Piety: An Initial Formation." Asia Journal of Theology 3 (Oct. 1989): 496-508.

Other Sources

- In Our Father's Land: Vietnamese Amerasians in the United States. Executive Summary of Survey. Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conferences, 1985.
- Kim, Stephen S. "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Prolegomenon to Theology of Community from an Asian-American Perspective." Uncover the Myth. Ed. Justo L. Gonzalez. Proceedings of the Roundtable of Ethnic Theologians, sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church, Cabrini Retreat Center, Des Plaines, Ill., 20-23 Oct. 1988.
- Wake, Lloyd K. "Salvation, Struggle, and Survival." Discover the Truth and Recover the Community. Ed. Stephen S. Kim. Proceedings of the Roundtable of Ethnic Theologians, sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church, Charles Cook Theological School and Conference Center, Tempe, Ariz., 8-11 Nov. 1990.